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Human insecurity in East Asia

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Edited by Michio Umegaki, Lynn Thiesmeyer and
Atsushi Watabe



**United Nations
University Press**

TOKYO • NEW YORK • PARIS

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United Nations University Press
United Nations University, 53-70, Jingumae 5-chome,
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925, Japan
Tel: +81-3-5467-1212 Fax: +81-3-3406-7345
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United Nations University Press is the publishing division of the United Nations University.

Cover design by Mea Rhee
Cover photograph by Qilai Shen / Panos Pictures

Printed in Hong Kong

ISBN 978-92-808-1164-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Human insecurity in East Asia / edited by Michio Umegaki, Lynn Thiesmeyer,
and Atsushi Watabe.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-9280811643 (pbk.)

1. Basic needs—East Asia. 2. Risk management—East Asia. 3. East Asia—
Social conditions—21st century. I. Umegaki, Michio. II. Thiesmeyer, Lynn.
III. Watabe, Atsushi.

HC460.5.Z9B38 2009

363.3095—dc22

2009000016

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Acknowledgements

The editors and authors of the essays in this volume represent only a fraction of an extended network of friends and colleagues throughout East Asia. All of us have gained invaluable support, insights, and inspiration from members of the network on fieldwork sites, during many of formal and informal workshops, and through frequent exchanges of e-mail.

Over the past few years the network has grown to cover a vast array of problems, such as HIV, chemical contamination, and environmental degradation among others, that threaten the safe and secure lives of people. Given the limited resources each one of us possesses, the network has become truly the lifeline for all of us in what we do. Above all, it provides us with access to the sites where these problems interfere with and disrupt people's otherwise ordinary and secure lives. We do believe that the network will continue to grow with newer and younger generations of researchers and practitioners.

Some of the members are no longer with us; but their spirits have never left us. Dr Tomoyuki Kojima, Keio professor and dean of East Asia studies in Japan, was always ready to extend his support, moral and otherwise. Dr Trinh Van Bao of Hanoi Medical University never ceased to smile, even when he was confronted with the immensely difficult task of tracing the imprints of chemical contamination on the human body and the environment all over Viet Nam. To these two exceptional individuals, we would like to dedicate this volume.

All of us have benefited greatly from the Japanese Education Ministry's support via its 21st Century Center of Excellence Program, through

which Keio University's policy studies group received funding between 2003 and 2008. The editors of this volume, with full support from the late Dr Kojima, tried to make best use of the programme, known as the COE Grant, to promote research on human security in East Asia. Additionally, the work represented in this volume would not have been completed had it not been for generous support from the Taikichiro Mori Memorial Research Grants, Keio University, which also provided the seed money for building and servicing the network of like-minded throughout East Asia.

Finally, this volume will mark the beginning of a series of publication projects for the Asian Laboratory at Keio University's Shonan-Fujisawa campus.

Abbreviations

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AI	active ingredient
AO	Agent Orange
ARCPPT	Asian Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CER	certified emission reduction
DOE	designated operational entity
FAO	UN Food and Agricultural Organization
GDP	gross domestic product
GHG	greenhouse gas
GMS	Greater Mekong subregion
GNI	gross national income
GNP	gross national product
HDI	Human Development Index
<i>HDR</i>	<i>Human Development Report</i>
HRD	human resource development
HS	human security
IMT-GT	Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPM	integrated pest management
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute (Philippines)
IUD	intrauterine device
JACK	Japan, China, and Korea (East Asia Atmospheric Observation Networks)
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation

KKU	Khon Kaen University
LEB	life expectancy at birth
LLL	lifelong learning
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Viet Nam)
MOH	Ministry of Health (Viet Nam)
MRA	mutual recognition arrangement
MRL	maximum residue level
NASN	National Air Surveillance Network (Japan)
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	overseas development assistance
PCC	Pesticide Control Centre (Viet Nam)
PDD	project design document
PHI	pre-harvest interval
PPD	Plant Protection Department (Viet Nam)
PPP	plant protection pesticides
PRC	People's Republic of China
RFD	Royal Forestry Department (Thailand)
RJCP	Rural Job Creation Programme (Thailand)
SRV	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
TCDD	Tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute
TSP	total suspended particles
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VOC	volatile organic compound
WHO	World Health Organization
WPL	workplace learning

Introduction

East Asia in a human security perspective¹

Michio Umegaki

Human security: Redefining problems

The beginnings

The 1994 *Human Development Report* introduced the notion of human security, “freedom from fear and freedom from want”, for the first time as an overarching policy goal.² The document of some 100 pages begins with an admonition: “For too long, the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country’s borders. For too long, nations have sought arms to protect their security.” Then it follows up with the obvious: “For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime – these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 3).

Published as it was just a few years after the end of the Cold War, its appeal was lost in the bleaker prognoses for world order, such as that of Samuel Huntington’s (1993) “The Clash of Civilizations?”. The twin goals of human security appeared to be no more than casual remarks, empty of substance, to be made at the coming World Summit on Social Development in 1995, for which the report was prepared.

The report itself may largely be blamed for its less than remarkable

*Human insecurity in East Asia, Umegaki, Thiesmeyer, and Watabe (eds),
United Nations University Press, 2009, ISBN 978-92-808-1164-3*

reception. For one thing, it offered a list of some 24 “identifiable” threats to human security under 8 major areas, ranging from pandemics such as HIV to degradation of global ecosystems, drug trafficking, and international terrorism. Given the fact that each of these threats is itself the tip of a huge iceberg, the list has the ironic effect of leaving everyone wondering uneasily how long it would become. For another, its readers likely felt that the list of minutely itemized threats and the tasks necessary to deal with them would end by making the list even longer and more overwhelming, making the hoped-for improved world something much “more unattainable and unrealistic” (Tow and Trood, 2000: 14). Yet all of this is a familiar scenario in any effort to improve human life, as exemplified by none other than our own post-war record of the ways in which we have tried to overcome wars, poverty, hunger, or inequality. The report, in other words, appeared to be merely a restatement of the obvious.

The transformation

It may have been fortuitous that the notion of human security survived its initiation phase, as two events, among others, played a significant role in popularizing it and eventually turning it into a set of usable propositions. One was the formation of a small but vibrant network of a dozen or so countries, the Human Security Network, which held its first gathering in 1997. The key members, Lloyd Axworthy of Canada and Knut Vollebaek of Norway, who conceived the network, had had prior exposure to a “new kind of global politics” bringing about a “sweeping change in [a] short period of time”. The occasion had been the preparing, drafting, and winning of agreement on the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. The occasion was really a demonstration of a “winning formula” (Small, 2001: 231) – a coalition of governments, civil society, and non-governmental organizations – for a divisive policy issue where national interests and partisan interests of the military establishments, landmine manufacturers, and others would ordinarily have created an impasse. The two men then sought more opportunities to test and expand this “winning formula”.

At the meeting of the network in May 1999, which brought together some dozen or so member countries for the first time, Sadako Ogata, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, gave a powerful speech reflecting her ground-level observations during her work at UNHCR. She could not have been a better observer of human insecurity, as she had been responsible for monitoring, examining, and helping the refugees who were excluded from the very shelter, the nation-state, which is presumably built to protect them. Her speech, while echoing the *Human Development Report* by saying that human security is better grasped

“through its absence than its presence”, stood out for its use of plain, in place of abstract, language:

If to be secure means to be free from fear of being killed, persecuted or abused; free from the abject poverty that brings indignity and self-contempt; free to make choices – then a majority of people in today’s world do not live in security. (Ogata, 1999)

Another event followed the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which exposed the vulnerability of East Asian national economies to the wayward flow of international capital at a time when the region was basking in admiration for its economic success in the preceding decade. Japan’s Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi, called for “an intellectual dialogue on building Asia’s tomorrow”. What is unmistakable is the plea for the protection of “the socially vulnerable segments of the population” in the light of human security. Instead of making an appeal to increase the production and investment capabilities of the region or of each nation in the region, Obuchi was emphatic about the importance of reinforcing people’s “capabilities” in coping with social strains such as those caused by the Asian financial crisis (Obuchi, 1998).

The Japanese government pushed Obuchi’s plea further by establishing the Trust Fund for Human Security in the United Nations in March 2000, which paved the way for the establishment of the Commission on Human Security a year later. These developments, while placing Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen, the two icons of human security, in the forefront, also helped consolidate the notion of human security and improve its practical footing. A little more symbolic but no less significant was the renaming of one of Japan’s aid policy programmes in 2003, the Grassroots Grant-in-Aid which had its origin in the 1970s. Following the overhaul of the concept of Japan’s ODA in 2003, the government renamed it the Grassroots and Human Security Grant-in-Aid Programme for nations outside Japan. The programme is unique in that applications for grants are usually initiated locally and the screening of applications is handled and completed within the authority of local embassies. The programme honours the initiatives prepared by those on the very spot where the need for policy solutions is most acutely captured. It also promotes swiftness in response without the usual time-consuming review and decision-making processes involving the entire bureaucratic hierarchy, which often distort the picture of what is needed (Chambers, 1997).

Concomitant to these developments, the notion of human security also began to acquire a much wider forum. The UN Millennium Summit of 2000 is a case in point. The now famous Millennium Development Goals stand out for their closer attention to improvements in the conditions of

life, such as literacy, gender equality, maternal health, and the public health environment among others. When taken together, these goals no longer treat human life either as hinging upon a single factor such as an increase in national income or as secured simply by virtue of protected national borders.

Problems redefined

Subtle but profound shifts in policy orientation have transpired from all these unilateral and multilateral initiatives and activities. There is now, for one thing, an unmistakable concern with how resources are sustained, distributed, and mobilized within national borders. The 1994 *Human Development Report's* admonition – “For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country's borders” – led the way. Human security documents are littered with concerns about the *interior* of a nation. Perhaps the clearest statement of this is that human security “is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 23).

Paradoxically, the attention to the interior of a nation makes it even clearer how individuals and their communities are exposed to threats to their security which know no national borders, such as global warming or pollution from distant origins. The lives of individuals or communities *within* a nation serve as a powerful magnifier of life-threatening or life-damaging issues whose origins may lie *beyond* its borders. This close attention, in turn, exposes the fact that protected national borders may do very little in protecting life within them.

This shift, in turn, leads to another: people are no longer viewed as part of a nation as such. There are people within a nation with higher or lower income, with better access or no access to such public services as hospitals or sanitation facilities. Even within the same income group, people and their lives do differ from each other in terms of the factors – education, health, and others – that determine the types and amount of goods and services needed to support life. In other words, how a nation performs, as measured by such indicators as GDP, savings rate, or life expectancy at birth, now matters less in the human security framework.

What matters more is how people live within the world that these and other “aggregate data” reconstruct and represent. This second shift suggests a need for a different kind of “indicator”, a *microscopic* perspective which reflects, and represents, the lives of many. Rob McRae puts it succinctly: the concept of human security “takes the individual as the nexus of its concern, the life *as lived*, as the true lens through which we should

view the political, economic, and social environment” (McRae, 2001: 15, *italics in original*).

This brings up a final shift. Individuals are no longer passive recipients, or beneficiaries, of policies made elsewhere. Individuals and their communities play the most critical and immediate role in capturing what needs to be done, which in turn makes them the best agents for protecting and improving their own lives. They live with the consequences not of policies as given but through their individual and/or communal efforts to devise ways by which to turn policies to their advantage in the very context of their lives, or ways in which to minimize potential adverse effects. This shift, though tacit in the 1994 *Human Development Report*, is clearly reflected in *Human Security Now*, the final report of the Commission on Human Security in 2003:

Human security ... aims at developing the capabilities of individuals and communities to make informed choices and to act on behalf of causes and interests in many spheres of life. That is why human security starts from the recognition that people are the most active participants in determining their well-being. It builds on people's efforts, strengthening what they do for themselves. (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 11)

The question that this shift poses, then, is how to “reinforce people's ability to act on their own behalf – and on behalf of others” (*ibid.*); how to empower individuals and their communities as the most active *participants* in making or improving their own lives.

A word of caution may be in order. The empowerment of people and their communities does not exempt the main actor in policy-making, the state, from its familiar “protective” role. The state's obligations have always lain first and foremost in what have continually been held as the legitimate spheres of state action – building and maintaining the overall environment for promoting empowerment of people and their communities. However, there is an important reservation about this role. The “protective” role must be performed in a manner that reduces threats from “events beyond [people's and communities'] control” (*ibid.*). A financial crisis, global warming and all the ills it triggers, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, and deterioration of water quality are but a few such threats whose impact has no national boundaries. All of them require policy coordination among states, transcending the conventional norm of protecting merely their own “citizens”. The state's new “protective role” lies in the promotion of cooperation with other states beyond the nation's borders, and not simply in the protection of national borders.

Concerns with the interior of a nation, the resolutely microscopic perspective in capturing broader threats to human life, and the liberation of

people from their passive status as beneficiaries of policy are the three components underpinning the notion of human security.

Human security, thus constructed, helps redefine all-too-familiar policy issues and problems in a manner which presumes that more participants can join in the process of finding, devising the responses to, and resolving the issues. This redefinition of “problems” respects the knowledge that is developed and tested by people as they live and confront problems in the very specific context of their lives. As such, it reflects an understanding that people are not simply the beneficiaries of any given policy that influences their lives.

This redefinition of the problems also facilitates a mode of thinking in which the solutions can be sought in the *efforts* at removing their causes or moderating their impact, rather than in the *end products* alone. Such a redefinition is perfectly consistent with the view that, given opportunities and resources, people do exercise the “ability to act on their own behalf and on behalf of others” in the specific context of their lives.

Incidentally, this attention to the efforts more than to the ends does not signal a compromise with, or acquiescence to, persistent problems. On the contrary, it reflects a position that life is much too valuable to be cast aside for the interim period before the causes of the problem are removed, especially given the possibility that the “interim” period could be indefinite.

An example may help illustrate the merits of this attention. The problem of HIV, a global crisis of a magnitude matched only by that of global warming, has been with us since the early 1980s. The total deaths are estimated at over 25 million, almost the equivalent of the casualties caused by the two world wars.³ Immense energy and resources have been invested in developing a solution that would seem obvious – powerful anti-HIV drugs. Life without fear of mortality from HIV is the goal, the end product of the anti-HIV efforts.

However, this problem does not leave people untouched during the interim period before the intervention of a powerful drug or treatment. For those who have already been infected, estimated at over 40 million, the goal of any efforts must lie elsewhere – that is, in living with HIV. For them the “solution” must be found in the efforts to make their lives, however limited they may be, worth living. For the relatives and families of HIV patients, too, the thought of “life without fear of HIV” is not even a partial blessing. Questions and burdens of many kinds weigh heavily upon their daily lives: how to care for the patients for the duration of their lives, how to secure their lost labour resources, how to make peace with themselves while fighting different sorts of stigma, and how to prevent HIV from spreading beyond the family confines. The attention to these efforts helps us uncover, and give due credit to, the ample examples

where, prompted by these threats to a secure life, people devise ways – such as mutual help networks – by which to support life and make it meaningful in the *interim*.

HIV may be too extreme a case. Yet it is still exemplary of the basic attitude we need to sustain as we confront many, perhaps less threatening, problems where life needs to go on before the solutions to its problems arrive. The attention to the *efforts* helps us recognize that people may not need to give in to, or passively accept, many of their problems as givens, and that they invent innovative ways of multiplying the utility of limited resources as they refuse to yield to their problems. In other words, the attention to their efforts acknowledges that people can protect life from being totally compromised by even the most insurmountable problems.

East Asia viewed through human security

The notion of human security, thus understood, gives an alternative view of East Asia, and provides East Asia, conversely, with an opportunity to examine some of the key propositions derived from the concept of human security. With all its diversity, cultural, historical, economic, social, linguistic, religious, and political, East Asia defies any attempt at a simple characterization, and is a gigantic field for the observation of policy innovations. The point of departure for this sort of observation is the economic performance of the region as a whole. By dubbing it a “miracle” region as recently as 1993, the World Bank (1993) also rendered East Asia a region of relative cohesion.

East Asia redefined

East Asia⁴ is both rich and poor. There is Japan, which, after nearly 15 years of stagnation, still takes its place among the leading economies of the world. The Republic of Korea and Singapore are not far behind, having rebounded quickly from the 1997 financial crisis. Then there are Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos PDR at the bottom of the low-income group in the region. The dynamic developmental spirals behind the East Asian economic miracles of the 1970s and 1980s have eluded these countries. These spirals once linked the economies in the region in a manner enabling the “follower” economies to take advantage of market opportunities offered by those advancing ahead of them.⁵ Unfortunately, these three countries may have arrived on the scene too late.

The attention to the *interior* of a nation or region redirects our concern away from the issue of whether or not East Asia may successfully

integrate these three into the developmental spiral, and to another issue: that the rich–poor divide does not run only along national borders. Having had nearly three decades of outstanding economic growth, China still has close to 17 per cent of its population living on under \$1 a day. To be sure, for China as a whole the change from around 35 per cent living on under \$1 per day in 1995 to the current level may indeed be an outstanding achievement. Yet we are speaking of 17 per cent of a population of over 1 billion people, which is equivalent to the sum total of the populations of Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar combined. Equally astonishing is another figure: 46 per cent of China’s entire population live on under \$2 a day (annual income of \$730), and this from a nation which claims an average per capita income of \$5,530.

The persistence of the income gaps *within* nations alerts us to the need for a cautious view towards East Asia. Even if the region as a whole may be achieving the targets set by, for example, the UN Millennium Development Goals, it is far from achieving the goal of ensuring a secure and stable life for a large portion of its population. This indictment, of course, should not be limited to East Asia, which actually is one of the very few regions with a remarkable record of success in reducing the poverty level as measured in GDP. It is rather an indictment of the mind-set, still prevalent, that economic growth is *the* solution to all the ills that poverty brings about.

A similar indictment, the “dethronement of GNP”⁶ voiced early in the 1970s, however, seems to have gone mostly unheeded. Figure I.1 may suggest why. Countries with higher GDPs tend to have less internal income gaps – as indicated by the Gini coefficient – than those with lower GDPs. With a few exceptions, such as the United States among the advanced economies and Viet Nam among developing economies, the figure suggests simply that economic growth should eventually bear the kind of fruit that can be shared among broader populations internally. If only by virtue of the absence of alternatives, then, economic growth has not lost its allure.

The issue that concerns us, however, lies elsewhere. Historical experience tells us that it may take 30 or even 40 years for most of the countries on the right half of Figure I.1 to reach the level of economic equality exhibited by those on the left. However, 20 or 30 years are really the length of one entire generation. This raises two important questions. What will life be like for the majority of the population during this generation-long *interim*? Are we to ignore the need to address some of the ills during this interim period just because the solutions to them are expected at a future point? It is one thing to speak of the need for the Weberian “stoicism”, long seen as one of the prerequisites for facilitating capital investment for economic development.⁷ However, it is entirely another thing to expect

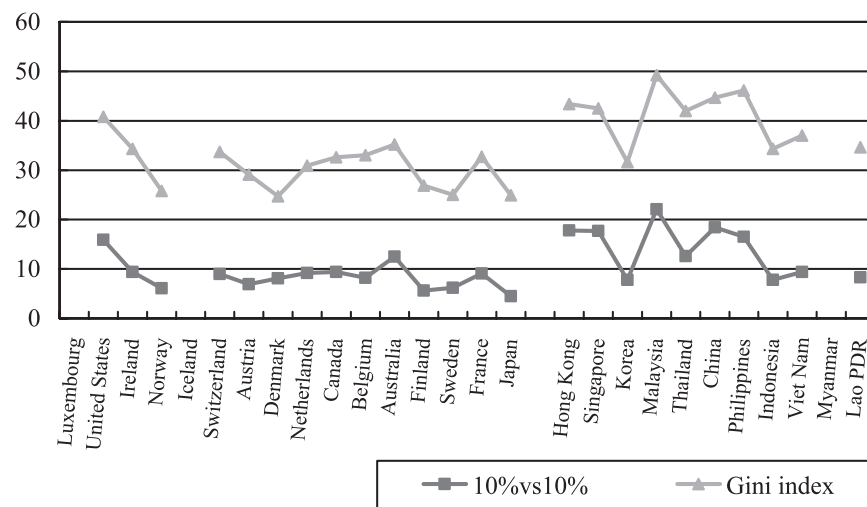


Figure I.1 Economic inequality (highest GNI countries and East Asia)

Note: 10%vs10% – ratio of the income or expenditure share of the richest 10 per cent to that of the lowest 10 per cent.

Source: United Nations Development Programme (2006).

the majority of the population to endure the interim period without sufficient “precedents” that such endurance does pay.

Beginning with Hofheinz and Calder’s (1982) *Eastasia Edge*, through the World Bank Policy Research Report (World Bank, 1993), many have argued that some East Asian countries, such as the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore first, and then Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, were such “precedents”. Yet the 1997 financial crisis uncovered the not-so-stable foundations of most of these “precedents”, and some of the figures cited above also offer counter-evidence to the “precedent” argument. The *interim* has not been completed, nor has there been any convincing sign of it ending, for the majority of East Asians. Life cannot be sustained and justified just because it appears to be on its way to improvement.

That, in turn, raises the second question: for whom are the benefits of economic growth policies conceived and prepared? Table I.1 shows the life expectancy at birth (LEB) at two different points in time in East Asia. At first glance, anyone whose age is currently above the LEB is presumed to be excluded as a beneficiary of economic growth. Not a ripple of economic growth may reach these people while they are alive. This portion, the elderly who are above or near the LEB, usually accounts for 2–7 per cent of the entire population. Considering also that even the age

Table I.1 Life expectancy at birth (LEB), 1999 and 2004, and percentage of population beyond or near LEB

	1999	2004	%
Cambodia	56.4	56.5	5
China	70.2	71.9	3
Indonesia	65.8	67.2	3
Japan	80.8	82.2	3
Korea	74.7	77.3	3
Laos	53.1	55.1	7
Malaysia	72.2	73.4	2
Myanmar	56.0	60.5	7
Philippines	69.0	70.7	2
Singapore	77.4	78.9	2
Thailand	69.9	70.3	4
Viet Nam	67.8	70.8	5

Source: US Census Bureau (undated).

groups under the LEB were born in the years when the LEB was lower than the current level, this portion of the population is very likely to become considerably larger. And for the majority in this age group, the elderly, the *interim* may not even start.

Furthermore, economic growth is not an isolated change towards a higher per capita income. It is a host of changes which often adversely affect human life. Here it may suffice to recall a familiar sequence of changes in rural areas as part of economic growth. Pressure for higher agricultural productivity, an indispensable ingredient of the economic growth recipe, sets off a series of changes. It usually facilitates the integration of small farmlands, their mechanization, and heavy reliance on chemicals. These, in turn, result in an increase in surplus labourers in the agricultural sector, prompting their migration to urban centres where employment opportunities are scarce, housing conditions far from acceptable, and the public health environment appallingly poor. For those remaining in rural villages, too, the transition to commercial agriculture is usually a mixed blessing. A heavy reliance on cash crops, while forgoing production for domestic or household consumption, makes their household economies vulnerable to fluctuations in the market prices of their products.⁸

All these changes may also disrupt the customary manner by which goods and services change hands among relatives and neighbours in support of their lives. Good will, and not a good credit rating, is the key means in meeting unexpected increases in demand for goods and services occasioned by a death or even sickness in a family. These and other informal, or extra-market, mechanisms for procuring the necessary goods

and services have to undergo profound changes. Economic growth, with all the accompanying changes in social life, is a change supported by, or entailing, immensely diverse changes that interfere with existing life, often making it worse before improving it. The critical phase for human life lies in this interim period before economic growth begins to improve it.

As stated in the 1996 *Human Development Report*, “If not properly managed, [economic growth could lead to people becoming] jobless, voiceless, ruthless, rootless and futureless, and thus [be] detrimental to human development” (United Nations Development Programme, 1996). Economic growth, in other words, not only counts out an older, and substantial, portion of the population as beneficiaries, but also threatens the foundations for its future beneficiaries. Of course, it may not be just an *economic* growth policy that forfeits the future for its own beneficiaries. Potentially, *any* policy that presumes a certain period for its results to emerge is bound to encounter a similar problem. What is unique about economic growth is that it requires a vast array of resources, material as well as mental, to be mobilized for a long period of time. The resources mobilized for economic growth are resources lost for alternative means of sustainable life.

To put it differently, a perspective is needed that captures people as active participants in the making of their own lives in the effort to survive the interim, and not as the beneficiaries of a policy whose outcome may or may not reach them. One human security perspective, “life as *lived*”, helps us capture the conditions of life during this important interim; and another, “empowerment of people”, helps us capture their innovative efforts under limited conditions for surviving the interim.

None of the problems mentioned above, such as income gaps within national economies, is unique to East Asia. They are prevalent elsewhere, especially in the regions that struggle to meet, for example, UN Millennium Development Goals. Irony in East Asia is the fact that these problems are far more glaring than in most other regions, precisely because of the region’s exceptional economic success measured in GDP growth since the end of the Second World War.

Human security perspectives

These brief observations, aided by human security perspectives, may suggest the need for a shift in our overall perspective. A much-needed focus may be the conditions for sustainable life during what we may casually term the *interim* phase. Figures I.2 and I.3 are graphic representations of how economic growth may meet the welfare needs of people. Figure I.2, admittedly a gross representation, may be useful in showing our

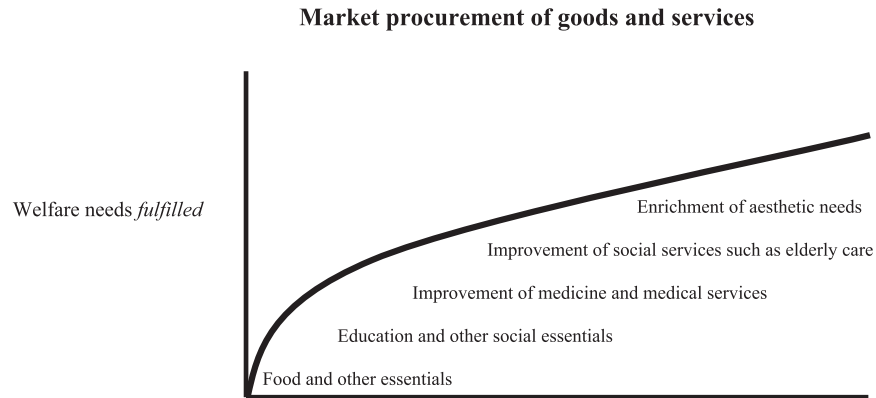


Figure I.2 Economic growth and welfare fulfilment

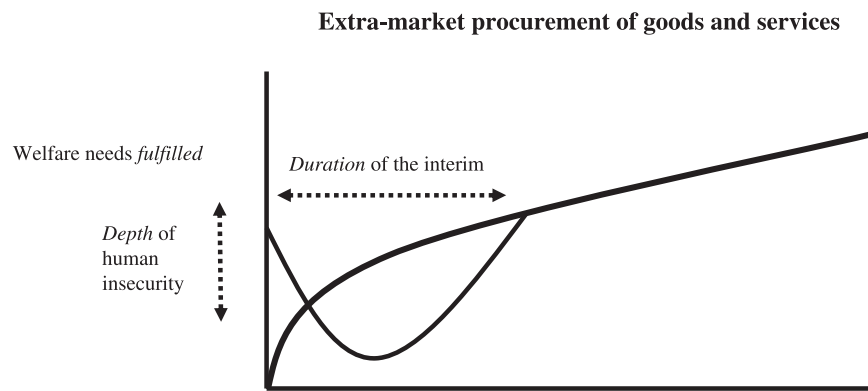


Figure I.3 Economic growth and human insecurity V-curve

conventional, and implicit, presumption that an increase in income improves life. The key assumption here is that the market functions as the mechanism for exchanging the goods and services that sustain life. Figure I.3, on the other hand, calls attention to the *interim* period, one of deepening human insecurity, as shown in the V-curve, before economic growth begins spreading its gains. This is the period when people may be deprived of their informal, or extra-market, mechanisms for exchanging the necessary goods and services.

This new focus should allow us to capture, for one thing, how economic growth either interferes with or improves the life of the society in question at different points in its progress. For another, and more importantly,

the new focus calls attention to the ways in which people confront economic growth, including its accompanying problems, with the limited resources at their disposal at any given time. The underlying proposition is that the majority of people, in any nation, live because of the simple fact that they have only the choice of living the life given to them, and not for the promise that their life would improve in “due time”. The fundamental differences among people, then, lie not so much in which country they live in as in their efforts and ability – or “capabilities” as Amartya Sen puts it (Sen, 1999, especially ch. 4) – to derive and multiply the kinds of “utility” they can attain from the resources at their own disposal.

Cast in the light of these perspectives, East Asia is no longer an exceptional region either for its economic success or for the obvious discrepancies between economic and other performance measured at national level and the persistence of many problems captured at subnational levels.

There are of course significant developments and characteristics which make the region different. The ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity readily strikes even a casual observer as something that makes the region unique. Historic events such as the Viet Nam War also separate the region from the rest. The war left lasting marks on the region through, for example, the wartime special procurement demands which served to usher in the growth period of the 1970s and 1980s for some countries in the region.

The human security perspective, however, prompts us to see any development on the regional scale in a somewhat different light. The growth and transformation of ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) are a case in point. Originally a loose alliance among five Southeast Asian countries, it now embraces all the countries in the region. With China, the Republic of Korea, and Japan joining in as part of ASEAN+3, it has truly become a regional organization to be taken quite seriously. We may add to this a development towards an even broader attempt at regional policy coordination frameworks: the East Asia Summit, the first of which was held in 2005 in Kuala Lumpur. The membership includes India, Australia, and New Zealand in addition to ASEAN+3. The forum, initiated by Malaysia’s former Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad, is quickly becoming the stepping-stone towards a regional integration resembling that of the European Union.

From a human security perspective, we may consider two ways of evaluating this development. First, with an original commitment to honour the non-interference principle, ASEAN and its expanded version have always meant that member nations exercise a certain degree of self-restraint as to each other’s internal affairs. Yet the growth and expansion of the East Asia Summit are really the story of fundamental shifts in

policy orientation. The earlier preoccupation with protecting national borders has given way to one of controlling and promoting cross-border issues and tasks such as environmental degradation, labour conditions for migrant workers, and an orderly international trade and investment environment. To put it differently, the development of policy coordination among the region's countries has been in line with the human security proposition that the state's role is to reduce or remove the threats of "events beyond [people's and communities'] control".

A second view of this development comes with a caution. Whether or not the development may eventually lead to an East Asian community, it is still a very long way away. In the meantime, the more promising the development becomes, the more profoundly it influences the distribution of scarce resources and the more likely it is to instil among many, including political leaders, the familiar feeling that life will become better *in due time*. In other words, it raises the same issue of "life in the interim" that accompanied the growth-first policy orientation. This is all the more reason, then, for calling attention to "life as lived" as the magnifier of how people capture, and devise ways to cope with, changes for better or worse.

Overview of this volume

The following chapters help illustrate only a fraction of the immensely diverse and complex sources of human insecurity prevalent in East Asia. Many of them, such as the excessive use of energy resources in industry and chemicals in agriculture, have been inseparable from the growth drive in the region since the early 1970s. There are also sources of insecurity which originate in the very benefits of growth-oriented policies, such as rapidly ageing populations as a result of improved diet and public health environments. Even the penetration of the market economy, the evidence of economic growth, could be an unexpected source of human insecurity, as it often renders tenuous the traditional or customary relationship between, say, farmers and their land.

Instead of tracing the origins of these sources of human insecurity, however, the chapters call attention first to the local contexts in which these sources manifest themselves, and then to the normal conduct of life by the people. The attention to the local contexts reflects our primary concerns: first, to capture how these sources interfere with and threaten what might otherwise be secure and sustainable lives; and second, to seek incidents of innovative policy responses by individuals or their communities. There is another, more implicit, concern. Nearly all these issues are evidence, as pointed out earlier, that the beneficiaries of a policy –

say, that of economic growth or development – are not the same people as those who bear the costs of it. Attention to the local context is a way of illuminating this lack of correspondence.

Our attention to the normal conduct of life is a reflection of our understanding that threats to human security may not take the form of unusual or cataclysmic events, and that people are left with the choice of embracing dormant and actual threats of disruption to their lives, regardless of their magnitude, in a manner that does not betray the conduct of life with which they are most familiar.

Each of the contributors to this volume maintains one or more field-work sites, where he or she has sustained observations of, and in most cases been directly exposed to, the local manifestations of threats to human security and efforts by the people and their communities to take up their disruptive impact. From the vast desertified area outside Shenyang in northern China to the crowded urban district of Da Nang, Viet Nam, from a hillside tea-producing hamlet outside Tokyo to rice-producing villages in northeastern Thailand, the contributors have exposed themselves to the consequences of policies made elsewhere, higher up in the national policy-making hierarchy. They have situated themselves on the spots where policies aimed at improving the life of a nation interfere with and often disrupt the lives of those who compose the nation. While acutely aware of the need for long-term policies such as economic development or relief for the victims of pandemics, these contributors are equally aware of the difficulty of effectively communicating the problems perceived at the local level to the policy-makers at the national and even regional policy-making levels. Through their first-hand observations, they are aware that life usually cannot wait for certain conditions to be met, but is there to be lived with whatever one has.

The chapters are divided broadly into two parts. Part I, “Living with human insecurity”, illustrates the ubiquity of threats to a safe and secure life. It uncovers the deceptively simple fact that people usually live in the manner with which they are most familiar, and not in a manner specifically designed to avert or extricate themselves from potential or explicit threats to their safe and secure lives. By contrast, Part II, “Intervening in human insecurity”, sheds light on the more explicit efforts to moderate and cope with threats of disruptions to life. It suggests that a consensus on a particular threat still falls short of generating pressure to change normal conduct of life among people, and that communication needs to be promoted among the concerned parties, between the government and the people, in advancing policies for human security. More importantly, Part II calls attention to cases where local, and not governmental, initiatives in reducing human insecurity often emerge when the threats are captured within the purviews of local, ordinary people.

In conclusion

There is a simple folk song in Quang Tri, Viet Nam, born out of the hardship imposed by foreign colonial rule for those who lived life with whatever resources they had. A truly human security song:

Ten Eggs

January, February, March, April, and all the difficult months
Go around and borrow 1 quan [a local currency under the French rule]
Go to Ke Dien [Spring] market and buy a hen
Bring it back home, it delivers 10 eggs
The first: rotten
The second: rotten
The third: rotten
The fourth: rotten
The fifth: rotten
The sixth: rotten
The seventh: rotten
The three left turn into three chicks
One: Hawk dragged
One: Crow caught
One: Falcon ate
Don't moan about hard life
There is the skin, there grows the hair
There is the bud, there grows a tree.

Notes

1. This chapter was originally published in *Keio SFC Journal* (2008), 8(1), pp. 33–46, and is reproduced with permission.
2. Actually, the origin of these twin goals can be found in the sixth clause of the Atlantic Charter of 1941, prepared and drafted by the leaders of the United States and Great Britain.
3. For updated information see UNAIDS: Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (2006).
4. By East Asia I refer to Japan, the Republic of Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Myanmar. Sometimes Taiwan is excluded, especially when relevant data are not available.
5. For a succinct account of this development see Watanabe (1989), especially chapters 2 and 3.
6. The director-general of the International Labour Organization, David Morse, used the term in a speech given in 1970 (quoted in Arndt, 1987: 92).
7. See, for example, Walt W. Rostow's arguments, which, despite initial criticisms for being merely a historical narrative rather than a theory of economic development, continue to dominate the conventional thinking that emphasizes the importance of savings and all else that instils and promotes savings (Rostow, 1960).
8. The literature abounds with discussions of misplaced hope for industrial-sector-led growth strategies, especially where employment opportunities are concerned. One of the earlier of these works is Morawetz (1974).

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Part I

Living with human insecurity

1

Embracing human insecurity: Agent Orange-Dioxin and the legacies of the war in Viet Nam

Michio Umegaki, Vu Le Thao Chi, and Tran Duc Phan

All of our returning veterans had a burning desire for children to repopulate our devastated country. When the first child was born with a birth defect, they tried again and again. So many families now have four or five disabled children, raising them without any hope. (Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, former vice-president of Viet Nam, quoted in Scott-Clark and Levy, 2003)

This is probably the most famous statement in Viet Nam on the issue of the wartime use of herbicides, known as Agent Orange. Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, born in 1920, went through all phases of the Indochina wars leading up to the unification of Viet Nam in 1976. As foreign minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Viet Nam, she was instrumental in bringing about the beginning of the end to the divided Viet Nam at the Paris Conference in 1973. For her, however, the war did not stop in 1975. Agent Orange left more battles to fight for the surviving soldiers of the wars of liberation.

There is something striking about this statement, and the life it touches upon. The soldiers wished to have their own families and resume “normal” life after many years – indeed, for some, decades – of wars of independence and unification. But, contaminated by the wartime use of toxic chemicals, their living environment does not honour their or even their children’s wish for normal life.

The Viet Nam War is often characterized as an ecocide (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1976). The massive amounts of toxic substances that rained on mountainous regions, farmland, and areas around strategic military installations such as major airbases in the South

devastated the vast forest areas and rice fields, and contaminated the rivers and lakes all around. The topsoil from deforested mountains eroded into nearby rivers, raising the level of the riverbeds and making them susceptible to flooding. Mangrove forests around the Mekong River basin and further south were not spared from the deadly herbicides either, and nearly 50 per cent of the whole forest was wiped out. The damage to biodiversity is incalculable.

The environment is also a carrier of the contaminants beyond the war generations. TCDD (Tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin) contamination spread from soil, lakes, and rivers to humans via food chains. The children and grandchildren of the veterans are *infected*, so to speak, by contaminants that have survived the war and travelled, and are still travelling, across time. Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination is an intergenerational pandemic, and its “virus” is dioxin.

It is not the use of the herbicides alone, however, that is responsible for the tragedies. Many factors deter ordinary citizens from taking a far more cautious approach to their living environment: the complex nature of the exposure-ailment relationship and the need to live normally under pressure for high agricultural productivity, among others. Consequently, similar tragedies, of perhaps different origins, continue to strike long after the use of toxic herbicides was discontinued. The purpose of this chapter is to tell the story of the victims of Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination and their families. It also endeavours to broaden the issue of Agent Orange-Dioxin from its narrow definition as the “legacy” of the Viet Nam War, and suggest that it has much wider implications for the relationship between people and their living environment.

The Agent Orange-Dioxin problem: The ambiguous boundary¹

In the early 1960s the United States, with the consent of the government of South Viet Nam, decided to replicate the use of herbicides by Britain in the Malay Peninsula in the 1950s in its efforts to suppress small-scale communist insurgents.² The US aim is clear: the military and intelligence found it imperative to remove all the shelter – trees and bushes – around the Ho Chi Minh Trail running down the Truong Son mountain range along the borders with Laos and Cambodia. The trail was the main artery pumping military *matériel* and combat units from the North to the South. For the same reason, the densely wooded areas along the Mekong River and areas adjacent to major military installations such as Da Nang US airbase were also targeted for herbicide spray. The destruction of crops, intended to cut off the food supply of the North Vietnamese regulars and

the Liberation Front army, was an equally important purpose. Altogether, nearly 10 per cent of all South Viet Nam was sprayed with the deadly herbicides.

Agent Orange, the most famous of all the herbicides, was so called because its containers were painted orange. A 50-50 mixture of powerful phenoxy herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, Agent Orange was found to contain the most toxic chemical, 2,3,7,8-T (Tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin, or TCDD).³ To illustrate its potency, 80 grams of TCDD, when poured into the water supply system for a city the size of New York, is said to be able to annihilate the whole population (Le Cao Dai, 2000: 53). The United States, with the South Vietnamese government's concurrence, sprayed nearly 20 million gallons (76 million litres) of Agent Orange and other herbicides over the 10-year period between 1962 and 1972. As a result, research on Agent Orange estimated that the total dioxin sprayed in the southern half of Viet Nam and adjacent areas was in excess of 170 kilograms (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1976: 16).

Not surprisingly, Agent Orange left adverse health effects among an untold number of Vietnamese, and whoever was near the sprayed areas. A report (Zumwalt, 1990; hereafter the Zumwalt Report) on the health effects of dioxin exposure among US soldiers, prepared and submitted in 1990 to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs,⁴ provided two lists of dioxin-related ailments. One suggests more than a dozen ailments which the author believes, with "a very high degree of confidence", are caused by exposure to dioxin; the other lists a dozen or so further ailments which he feels "comfortable in concluding" are connected to dioxin exposure (ibid.: 52). Le Cao Dai, a war veteran and former director of the Agent Orange Victims Association of Viet Nam's Red Cross, offers a list of twice as many ailments (Le Cao Dai, 2000: 109–125).

One irony is the tragic consequences of dioxin exposure that struck the family of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt II, the author of the report mentioned above and a commander in charge of ordering the herbicide spraying during the war. One of his sons, Elmo III, was a Navy officer active in the Mekong Delta region. Soon after returning to the United States he had a son, Elmo IV, who was diagnosed as having a severe learning disability. Elmo III soon also found himself battling two kinds of cancer, which he and his father suspected were linked to wartime dioxin exposure (Zumwalt and Zumwalt, 1986); and he died in 1988.

This and other examples of tragedies aside, however, all the problems associated with the Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination raise even more questions which seem to have no ready answers.

First of all, who are the victims? How many are there? These two most obvious and simple questions remain largely unanswered. For one thing,

it is impossible to determine the number of those who were directly exposed to Agent Orange – the potential victims. Some 2.5 million US soldiers, and tens of thousands of soldiers from Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines, were likely to have been exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides during tours of duty. Many residents of South Viet Nam and the border regions of Laos and Cambodia, where the demographic data were woefully inadequate, need to be added to these potential victims. Then there are the birth defects and other ailments among the children and grandchildren of the war generations, suggesting that the total number of potential victims easily reaches and surpasses 10 million. It is simply an almost impossible task to estimate the number of “victims” among this vast number of potential victims.

Making the estimate even more difficult, not all who were exposed to Agent Orange necessarily contract the often life-threatening or fatal ailment(s). A number of factors could influence the chances of making some people more vulnerable to contracting diseases than others. The levels of nutrition or health of those exposed could be such a factor. Contraction of ailments could also vary with the duration of exposure or the dose of the herbicides. The determination of who the victims are has thus presented mammoth challenges.

Further, those who have not contracted any ailments up to this point still are not necessarily assured of “safe journeys” for the rest of their lives. One of the households we interviewed told the story of their three sons, all of whom developed an ailment whose symptoms resembled those of cerebral palsy *after* they reached 17 or 18 years old, and died before the age of 25. In other words, there are not only victims with actual damage to health, but also victims who fear the unknown likelihood of contracting debilitating ailments.

The 2.5 million US soldiers, whose records of exposure are relatively easy to establish, are no exception. In 1984 the US Supreme Court recommended seven US-based manufacturers of the herbicides to establish a \$180 million relief fund as part of the out-of-court settlement in a class action suit brought by some of the exposed former US soldiers. About 50,000 Viet Nam War veterans had received varying degrees of compensation by the end of 1994, the year when the fund was scheduled to be terminated. However, these 50,000 represented only those who reported signs of their ailments to medical authorities and were certified as victims of dioxin exposure. There are a great many more veterans and their families who were left out of the process by which to determine if their ailments could be traced back to wartime herbicide exposure.⁵ These include those who were not aware of the out-of-court settlement; those who chose not to report to the appropriate authorities; those who may

have died before 1984; and those who contracted their ailments *after* 1994. It would take another 10 years for those who were not satisfied with the 1984 out-of-court settlement to re-open the lawsuit in 2003.⁶

On the Viet Nam side, the estimates of victim numbers vary vastly, from 1 million to a more recent 7 million. The vacillating estimates can be attributed to a number of factors, the key one of which is the financial cost involved in identifying a victim. The \$1,000 needed for a blood test to determine dioxin levels in the blood is an immense burden for a nation whose annual income per capita barely exceeds \$800. Furthermore, Viet Nam remained under the pressure of constant war preparedness long after 1975. The military excursion into Cambodia and the border war with China deprived Viet Nam of much of the time and resources needed to survey the damage of the wartime herbicides, much less to explore the extent to which the damage is extended to the children and grandchildren of the war generation.⁷

A second source of the ambiguity surrounding the Agent Orange-Dioxin issue is caused by the *shifting estimates* of the amount of dioxin sprayed. The earlier estimate of 170 kilograms has been readjusted upwards. With a larger amount of dioxin, a chemical with such a devastating capacity, the victims and the damage generally also would have to be readjusted upwards.

The Zumwalt Report found that the “military” formulation had a higher dioxin concentration than the “civilian” version due to the lower cost and speed of manufacture.⁸ The Columbia University Public Health Group, having reviewed military and other records, found that the Agent Orange sprayed during earlier operations contained much higher doses of dioxin than later phases (Stellman et al., 2003). Furthermore, the Zumwalt Report, the Columbia Public Health Group, and others all found that leaks from storage areas, the emergency dumping of unsprayed herbicides, and other episodes must have contributed to increasing the total amount of dioxin that was sprayed. A new estimate is now reaching over 600 kilograms (ibid.).

A third point to note, and a source of ambiguity, is *the shifting realization* of the herbicides’ toxicity. Within a few years of spraying commencing, the US government began receiving all sorts of reports warning of the adverse effects on human health, including birth defects. By late 1969 more confirmations, though based on experiments on mice, reported that 2,4,5-T could well cause malformations. All these findings eventually led the Department of Defense to suspend partially the spraying of herbicides. A public outcry increased the pressure against the use of the herbicides as more scientific evidence continued to mount. On 15 April 1970 the US Surgeon General issued a warning that “the use of 2,4,5-T might be hazardous to our health”. The Secretaries of

Agriculture, Health, Education and Welfare, and the Interior jointly announced the “suspension of the use [of 2,4,5-T] around lakes, ponds, ditch banks, recreation areas and homes, and crops intended for human consumption”. All were alarmed by published studies suggesting that 2,4,5-T was teratogenic. Finally, on the same day, the Department of Defense announced the suspension of the use of Agent Orange (Zumwalt, 1990: 7–8). It would take more than six months, however, before the announcement was put into effect. The spraying of 75 per cent of the entire amount of Agent Orange took place between the time when the first warning was sounded and the time of its termination.⁹ One suspects that those who were exposed to the herbicides and contracted ailments were the victims not only of dioxin, but also of the delayed actions taken against its use.

This raises a few questions. First, were warnings ever sent to US military personnel in Viet Nam? Second, if so, were countermeasures of some sort suggested to them? Third, was there any warning or precaution taken for those US soldiers in case they contracted inexplicable ailments after their one-year tour of duty? Very little evidence is available assuring that any, or any sufficient, warnings were given at the front or at home. This may be confirmed by the fact that a documentary programme made and aired by one of the major US networks in 1978 sent shock waves among the US veterans (Young, 2002).

On the Viet Nam side, the realization of and countermeasures against the toxic dioxin were at best irregular. The majority of those who were exposed to the herbicides were either ignorant of the chemicals or not in a position to examine the cause(s) of the inexplicable malaise or ailments they witnessed at the front. Dr Le Ke Son, a conscript in the North Regular Army during the war and currently chairing a national committee (Office 33) overseeing the research and relief activities on the consequences of Agent Orange, recalls: “The government proposed that a line of runners carry blood and tissue samples from the front to Hanoi. But it was more than 500 miles and took two months, by which time the samples were spoiled. How could we make the research work? There was no way to prove what we could see with our own eyes” (Scott-Clark and Levy, 2003).¹⁰ Another witness, a farmer we interviewed in central Viet Nam, remembers: “A white mist with a sweet smell came down after the plane, and I saw all the bushes, crops and weeds wilting away a few days later. I felt a little awed and stayed away from the scene for a while.” There was not much else for the farmer to rely on in grasping what developed before his eyes, except puzzlement at the inexplicable changes in the landscape and the fear it caused that kept him from the contaminated area.

One last point of note is the interference of non-scientific factors in the process by which the toxicity of the herbicides was “scientifically” estab-

lished. These contributed to delaying the actions against the use of Agent Orange. The Zumwalt Report is a critical review summary of numerous scientific reports on the toxicity of Agent Orange by many research and medical establishments up to the time of its publication, authorized by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (Zumwalt, 1990). It stands out in the report that the earlier research was done primarily on civilian use, and not military use, of 2,4-D or 2,4,5-T. It can be suspected that, as a result, the findings were rarely put together in a manner that could reveal the adverse effects upon human health until later.

The laxity in perceiving the danger that Agent Orange posed may also be attributed to a factor other than scientific knowledge concerning the chemical. A government scientist, Dr James Clary, testified: “because the material was to be used on the ‘enemy,’ none of us were overly concerned. We never considered a scenario in which our own personnel would become contaminated with the herbicide. And, if we had, we would have expected our own government to give assistance to veterans so contaminated” (ibid.: 6).

However, of all the non-scientific factors, partisan interests may have been the most potent, be they business interests of the chemical manufacturers or interests of the governments whose accountability to citizens was at stake. Robert Allen, a journalist, meticulously chronicled the complex and prolonged processes by which the scientific findings concerning the toxicity of dioxin, and their bases, were subjected to conflicting interpretations and prevented from reaching wider audiences. It is indeed telling of the issue of dioxin that his book, *Dioxin War, has Truth and Lies about a Perfect Poison* as its subtitle (Allen, 2004). Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, a much-decorated veteran from the Second World War to the Viet Nam War, had no reason to suspect foul play in the scientific communities of his own country. Still, after going over the records of scientific research done at one of the key US research establishments, the Centre for Disease Control, to establish the adverse effect of Agent Orange, he could not help suspecting “political pressures . . . interfered with the kind of professional, unbiased review Congress had sought to obtain” (Zumwalt, 1990: 24, and see also 13–35).

All these observations should by now make it clear that the spraying of Agent Orange and other herbicides between 1962 and 1972 alone did not determine the extent or the seriousness of the damage done. It was the squabbling over the scientific findings, politically and otherwise motivated, that resulted in stretching the period of Agent Orange spraying. The majority of the deadly herbicides were sprayed during this period of prevarication.

Dr Clary’s understanding – “we would have expected our own government to give assistance to veterans so contaminated” – proved to be

groundless and reflected merely a laxity in the perception of the impending danger. Neither warnings nor precautionary measures were offered by the US government to the military personnel in South Viet Nam. In other words, these human factors in the actual use of Agent Orange were as potent as the herbicide itself in spreading its damages.

Also for Viet Nam, which really was not in a position to control the use of the chemicals, human factors that influenced the extent of the damage are abundant. One such factor is that there were no resources available even to start the rudiments of research. The nature of the war itself was another. The war was fought between two sides where there could be no reconciliation short of eliminating one or the other. Later, given the fact that post-unification Viet Nam was preoccupied with conflicts on a regional scale well into the 1980s, it was also not in a position to deal with domestic issues of post-war settlements. In addition, Viet Nam was a divided country during the use of Agent Orange, and the majority of the victims – both combatants and non-combatants – were residents of the South. It should come as no surprise, then, that care for the actual and potential “victims” of Agent Orange has been of secondary importance.¹¹ The absence of a more systematic and comprehensive way of curtailing the consequences of the contamination left the majority of the residents of the South unprotected.

The Agent Orange-Dioxin problems in the context of life

What follows is a report based on our research between December 2004 and March 2007. Frequent short visits (three or four days at a time), rather than a few long stays, were the method adopted from the very beginning. Though this was necessitated in particular by Umegaki’s teaching and other duties in Tokyo, it enabled us to observe the communities with signs of Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination more than once; thus we could revise some of our questions when the necessity arose, and also observe the communities against the backdrop of the changing seasons and different daily routines.

Investigation

Throughout our three-year investigation our main concern remained the same, though very broadly defined: the “social and other costs” of the Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination. The focus of our research was families who have one or more members suffering from health problems traceable to dioxin contamination (hereafter the AO families). There

were also a few issues or puzzles we wanted to focus on to guide our research.

First, there is the financial issue. Viet Nam has exhibited remarkable economic performance since 1986, the year it embarked upon a set of ambitious reforms collectively known as *Doi Moi*, and more so since 1994 when the United States finally lifted a trade embargo which had been in place since 1975 following unification. Still, Viet Nam remains one of the poorest countries in East Asia. Further, the great majority of residents in the communities where we conducted our research are well under the absolute poverty level set by the UN Millennium Development Goals. The financial hardship of the AO families, exacerbated by having handicapped children, is an obvious topic we wished to probe. At the same time, however, there was doubt among us as to what, if anything, might be revealed *specifically* by probing the weight of the additional financial burden on already poverty-stricken households. The real question looms larger: what is the economic life of the AO families, to whom any foreseeable change in cash income may make very little difference?

Secondly, we were especially concerned about the way(s) the AO families see their wider community, and vice versa. The War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City exhibits, among other things, still-born and deformed babies in formalin bottles, and conveys the horrifying consequences of the deadly herbicides. The AO families are not, of course, a museum. Yet, in Viet Nam, the majority of residents in rural communities have been deprived of very basic knowledge about Agent Orange and other chemicals. Our assumption was that the signs and symptoms of AO-induced ailments, such as deformed bodies or learning disabilities, had remained inexplicable and thus attracted more than mere curiosity among the residents. Our concern was how the AO families, seemingly well integrated into the community, dealt with the inquisitive eyes – if not outright prejudice, bias, or alienation – of the community and neighbours. Additionally, one more question emerged as the research progressed: what was there to be shared between the AO families and the rest of the community?

These two concerns lead to a puzzle. What do the AO families rely on in sustaining their lives, while they have a very limited income and at the same time may be facing a subtle form of segregation within the community? For the AO families with the additional burdens of caring for handicapped children, the impact of any unexpected rise in the demands – due, for example, to a sudden deterioration in the health of a handicapped child – on their time and income could easily be paralyzing. What are the resources available to them for making this impact less absolute?

The sites of the investigation

During this round of research we covered three districts from the north to the south: Kim Bang in Nam Ha province, Thanh Khe in Da Nang, and Phu Cat in Binh Dinh province. Of these three districts, Kim Bang was spared from herbicide spraying. The reason for choosing it as a research site is that the district is home to a large number of former North Viet Nam Regular Army members who were exposed to Agent Orange while moving along the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the war. It is relatively easy to establish the cause-effect relationship between dioxin exposure among the war generation and the various ailments among their children and grandchildren.

Kim Bang is located about 60 kilometres southeast of Hanoi. The major source of income is agriculture: produce is consumed within the community, or sent to the adjacent areas, Hanoi among others, and overseas markets. Kim Bang is linked to Hanoi by a major thoroughway, but is still more than a one-hour drive away. Small-size motorcycles, the principal means of transportation for local residents, would take twice as long to cover this distance. As one of the residents testified, "Hanoi is one-day-trip away." Kim Bang, despite its proximity to Hanoi, is an isolated rural community.

One noteworthy point about the community is that the majority of residents engage in double- or triple-crop-a-year rice production. This leaves very little time for the farmers to seek any other source of income, or spend any length of time elsewhere. The farmers spend most of their time, working or otherwise, in their own communities in the district, making the whole district even more distant from any other communities.

The other two districts embrace the "hotspots" where the spraying of herbicides was intense. The Da Nang and Phu Cat airbases were strategically important for the operations of the United States, the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam, and the contingents from the Republic of Korea during the war. The spraying was justified as a means to protect these large-scale military installations. The airbases are also known for having had the storage facilities for Agent Orange, which are now considered one of the key sources of contamination (Stellman et al., 2003; Boivin et al., 2007).

Da Nang, the fourth-largest city after Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Haiphong, has a population of over 700,000. The airbase, located in the middle of the city, was the centre of action during the war following the Tonkin Bay incident in 1964. The US Marines, the first full-scale combat units to arrive, landed on a nearby beach in 1965, reportedly to guard the airbase. It was also for the protection of the airbase that the United States sprayed Agent Orange. Thanh Khe, adjacent to the airbase, is a typ-

ical urban community with an immensely high population density: an estimated 160,000 people are squeezed into a little over 9 km².

Da Nang and the surrounding areas constitute one of the narrowest strips of land in Viet Nam, squeezed between the South China Sea on the east and the Truong Son mountain range on the west. The border with Laos running through the mountainous west is just 60 or 70 kilometres away from the coast to the east. The hills embracing the branch paths from the Ho Chi Minh Trail are within arm's reach of the city. During the war some city residents made almost daily trips along these paths carrying ammunition and other war supplies to the North Vietnamese regulars and units from the National Liberation Front. The conventional front-rear distinction apparently vanished in these hills.

The contaminants may have rained on them directly during their routine supply missions. It might be the river fish or cattle meat they may have eaten, or the well water they drank, that caused birth defects and other ailments among their children and grandchildren. Communities in Da Nang are so close to the major US military installation, and to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, that the whole living environment was and still is the carrier of the contaminants.

Phu Cat is about 250 kilometres south of Da Nang. Unlike Da Nang, this district is enormous, about 700 km². The whole district is strictly rural. Rice, cassava, and peanuts are the main sources of cash income, and subsistence living, for the majority of the farmers. The district embraces Mount Nui Ba in the middle, which overlooks Route 1 and the north-south railroad. Strategically a critical point, Nui Ba itself was targeted for the 1967-1968 intensive spraying of herbicides.

The communities we investigated surround the base of this mountain. Each is somewhat distant from the others and there is very little sign that the residents sustain much regular contact with others beyond the border of each community. One of the "hotspots", the Phu Cat airbase, currently used as a commercial airport, is a good 10 kilometres away from the closest of all the communities we investigated. Qui Nhon is a seaport with a population of 250,000, with one major general hospital and a college for education. Its distance from the communities we investigated, however, is a two-hour bike ride; very few community residents frequent this city.

From 15 or so kilometres to the west of Phu Cat, the plains begin to slope upwards, eventually leading to the central highlands which used to be dotted with US forward bases, such as the one in Pleiku. The Ho Chi Minh Trail ran along the border with Laos a little further west from the highland regions. Thousands of narrow paths, no wider than one metre, criss-cross the rolling hills between Phu Cat, the central highlands, and beyond. The villagers supporting the revolutionary cause trekked these

paths day in and day out, carrying on their backs loads of food, ammunition, and other military supplies to the Ho Chi Minh Trail or its branch routes. Often the villagers transformed themselves into fellow combatants, prompting the US military leaders once to lament: “These people are farmers by day and Viet Cong by night.” Here, too, much like Da Nang, the front-rear distinction vanished in the landscape of rolling hills, low bushes, rice paddies, and tall elephant grasses.

This distinction had also vanished in the minds of the majority of farmers we interviewed in Da Nang and Phu Cat. Among the questions we prepared, the one concerning their wartime affiliations or ties with either side is particularly important, because the affiliation, if documented, plays a decisive role in qualifying some of these farmers, and their children and grandchildren, to receive monetary compensation as “victims” of Agent Orange. To this question, however, there were very few responses in which people used the terms *Bo Doi* (the Units), indicating that they were regular soldiers of the North, or *Chien Si Giai Phong* (Fighters for Liberation), indicating that they were regular members of the National Liberation Front. The most frequent term used in their responses was *Du Kich* (a partisan or guerrilla), a generic term describing all combatants outside the regulars of the North and the National Liberation Front. *Du Kich* could mean almost anyone, from boys and girls in their teens to the elderly, who *believed* they had some role in the war of unification. In fact some, who only later revealed that they were *Chien Si Giai Phong*, still chose to describe themselves as *Du Kich*. The frequent use of *Du Kich* by the residents of Phu Cat and Da Nang indicates that the war was fought amid the ongoing demands of daily life.

The “victims”: Who they are

We investigated over 100 families, including a dozen or so in the same districts who have been spared the effects of dioxin contamination; this group was investigated for the purposes of comparison. The breakdown of the AO families from the three districts is 29 (Kim Bang), 15 (Tanh Khe), and 48 (Phu Cat).

The questions in our enquiry were the obvious ones: family composition; household income; debts; communal activities; possible reasons for and timing of initial dioxin contamination; and the medical and other care services they seek, among others. We generally spent 40 minutes to a little over an hour at each interview. We also interviewed about 20 AO families more than once at different points in time.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 give the size of the AO families and the age of the family heads, and figure 1.1 shows the age distributions in the three districts. When combined, they reveal one important point: the size of the

Table 1.1 Size of AO families

No. of families

	3-4 members	5-6 members	7-8 members	More than 9 members	NA
Kim Bang	0	13	14	2	0
Tanh Khe	5	6	4	0	0
Phu Cat	9	18	18	1	2

Table 1.2 Average age of heads of AO families

No. of families

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Kim Bang	2	11	16	0	0	0
Tanh Khe	5	0	4	4	2	0
Phu Cat	1	2	9	17	12	2

Note: Birth year: 1 = before 1935, 2 = 1936–1945, 3 = 1946–1955, 4 = 1956–1965, 5 = 1966–1975, 6 = after 1976

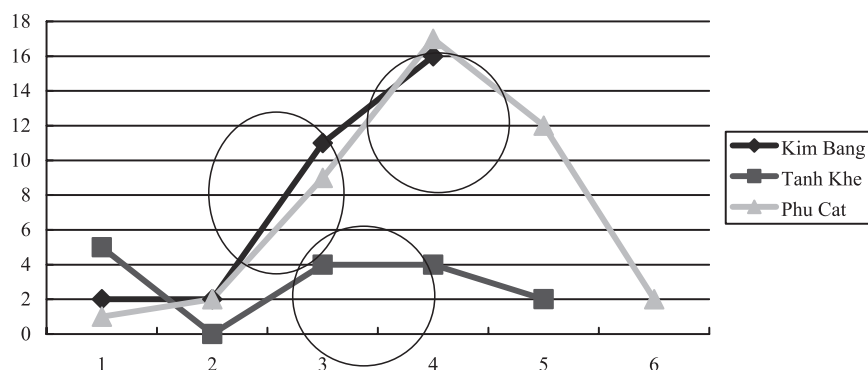


Figure 1.1 Average age distribution of heads of AO families

Note: Birth year: 1 = before 1935, 2 = 1936–1945, 3 = 1946–1955, 4 = 1956–1965, 5 = 1966–1975, 6 = after 1976

AO families is generally larger and the heads of the families are relatively older in Kim Bang. This feature reflects the fact that exposure was limited to those who were on the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the war. They had already reached a certain age by the time they joined the war, and were also less informed of the possible consequences of their exposure to Agent Orange-Dioxin. They fit the portrait of the veterans that Madame Nguyen Thi Binh described, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

The “victims”: How they support themselves

Nearly all the AO families we interviewed are poor, even against the UN Millennium Development Goals standard. Soon after we began our investigation, however, the idea of grasping the hardship of the AO families' lives through their income level began to evaporate. After the sixth or seventh family, we recognized a pattern in their responses to our enquiries concerning their monthly or annual income. They answered with round numbers, and almost instantaneously. “How much do you make a month?” would be answered by “200,000 VND” (roughly \$14) or “300,000 VND”. We wondered whether the interviewees were so used to this sort of enquiry that they had ready-made answers, and the accuracy of the answer was secondary; or if they never thought much about their cash income one way or the other so that the answers, accurate or not, did not make much difference or sense. On rare occasions the interviewees appeared to struggle with the question before finally answering “ah, I don't know”. Those were also the rare occasions when we felt their answers were authentic.

These encounters led us to doubt the validity of some of the data we collected. The question bothered us then as it does now: what would indicators such as cash income tell us about the AO families' lives? Or what are the differences between AO families with more income and those with less? We did continue raising the same questions, however, as we hoped the answers might give us at least a measure of comparison.

Another doubt followed. What are the sources of “differences” in the economic lives of the AO families when all are more or less *equally* poverty-stricken? Nearly every AO family, with the exception of a few in each of the three districts, maintains a “less than a dollar a day per person” life. We would have to seek factors other than cash income to explain the differences in their economic lives. One factor, we thought, would be any additional income (in the form of loans/debts, gifts, or savings). The issue of the credibility of the answers aside, however, we immediately doubted if any difference could be made in life by the meagre addition of a few dollars per month. Our preoccupation with a higher or lower income would lead us nowhere.

Of course, nearly all the interviewees expressed their hope for a “higher income”. They were eager to list all the things they could do with more income, such as sending handicapped children to doctors on a regular basis, to rehabilitation training, or even to a school with special facilities. Yet two things struck us as we continued the interviews: nearly all the families had had no experience in benefiting from what they claimed they could do with more income; and none had knowledge of

Table 1.3 Access to “stable” sources of monetary resources

No. of families

District (no. of AO families)	Regular income					NA
		Including pensions	Debt 1	Debt 2	Debt 3	
Kim Bang (29)	29	22	4	7	1	4
Tanh Khe (15)	15	14	1	6	1	2
Phu Cat (48)	7	0	15	8	5	5

Notes: Pensions include compensation for war invalids, AO victims, and wartime contributions to the “revolutionary cause”.

Debt 1 = Creditors are commercial and semi-government banks for the poor.

Debt 2 = Creditors are banks, relatives, and friends.

Debt 3 = Creditors are relatives and friends.

NA = The informants have no clear memories as to who the creditors are.

how their incomes could increase. No wonder there was very little enthusiasm when they expressed their hope for a higher income. The sources of differences in the livelihoods of the AO families lie elsewhere.

Table 1.3 shows one such source: the access to “stable” sources of cash – and the critical term here is “stable”. The stability of their means at least has the moderating effect of enabling the family to bear any debilitating contingencies, such as a death in the family, the flooding of their rice paddies, or the birth of another unexpected child, among others.

There are a few points of note in table 1.3. First, even though both Kim Bang and Phu Cat are predominantly rural districts, the AO families in Kim Bang all have a regular income of one kind or another, including pensions for the AO victims and/or their parents. This is due to the simple fact that the heads of the families in Kim Bang were formerly regular North Vietnamese Army members, and are in the advantageous position of having received government certification, with relative ease, for their children being Agent Orange-Dioxin victims. By contrast, the heads of the Phu Cat AO families are believed to have a more difficult time obtaining similar government certification. The most important factor of all is that there is very little documentation available to the parents that would prove their wartime affiliations, for nearly all of them identify themselves as *Du Kich*.

Finally, a large portion of the Phu Cat AO families have accumulated loans, despite the fact that only a fraction of them have regular income on which they can rely for debt repayments. The use of the loans varies from purchasing calves for investment purposes to responding to unexpected demands on cash such as funerals, weddings, or repairing leaky

roofs. What is striking is their accumulation of debts well beyond their capacity to repay, yet no one exhibited any particular regret about the debts.

“All I need is to borrow more from the bank before the debt comes due.”

“I borrow money from my friends and relatives to pay the money back to the bank.”

“Due date? No, I don’t remember.”

“The guy in the bank in charge of debt collection is a friend from my village. He’ll just wait.”

Responses of these kinds were not exceptions, which prompted us to alter the way we view their indebtedness. The “debts” are so well integrated into the family’s working budget that many of the AO families do not consider them as “debts” in the conventional sense of the term as used in the credit market. In other words, what makes the difference among the AO families, or even the normal families, is access to an informal “credit market” where the key is customary trust between creditors and debtors, and not the “credit rating” of the latter. Three exceptions, one in each of the three districts, where the AO families faced the threat of eviction or of losing everything they owned, are cases where the creditors are “hot” money lenders lending at exorbitant rates (Da Nang) or where the heads of the families are “outsiders” from elsewhere (Phu Cat and Kim Bang).

The “victims”: The “damage” to life

The indisputable fact separating the AO families from the other residents in the communities is the presence of handicapped children. Still, a caution is necessary: the presence of these children should not be reduced simply to factors such as an extra burden of care or the loss of labour. Given the fact that the majority of residents in the three communities have similar “burdens” already, stemming from factors such as a large family size, the difference is only one of degree.

The only thing that is incontestable about the AO families, then, is the way they view their children and the behaviour traceable to this view. Tables 1.4 and 1.5 show the number of children parents had after they had the first handicapped child and after the second, respectively. At first glance, it is obvious that the majority of parents – Kim Bang 83 per cent, Thanh Khe 80 per cent, and Phu Cat 69 per cent – chose to have more children even after having a handicapped child. There is only a slight dif-

Table 1.4 Deterrence of AO damage: Number of children after first handicapped child

No. of families

	I	II	III	NA	Total
	0	1 child	More than 2		
Kim Bang (29)	4	5	19	1	29
Thanh Khe (15)	3	7	5		15
Phu Cat (48)	11	14	19	4	48
Total	18	25	43	5	

Table 1.5 Deterrence of AO damage: Number of children after second handicapped child

No. of families

	I	II	III	NA	Total
	0	1 child	More than 2		
Kim Bang (29)	2	7	8		17
Thanh Khe (15)	3	1	1		5
Phu Cat (48)	5	4	1		10
Total (92)	10	12	10		32

ference between the Kim Bang parents, relatively older and believed to be less informed of the adverse effects of AO-Dioxin exposure, and the Phu Cat parents, many of whom became adults after unification and are believed to have been given warnings against conception and pregnancy.

What, then, do the 18 families (table 1.4) who had no child after the first handicapped child represent? We need to call attention to the fact that, of these 18 AO families, 9 already had 4 or more children before the first handicapped child. The fear of having an additional "load" on household expenditure must have had at least an equal weight in their minds as the fear of having another handicapped child. Conversely, at the risk of oversimplification, a conclusion can be drawn that, of the 92 AO families we investigated, only 9 chose not to have more children for fear of having more handicapped children.

We may reason, on the other hand, that the deterrent effect of having a handicapped child may be reinforced after a repetition – that is, after the second handicapped child. The AO families that support this reasoning are the 10 in table 1.5 who did not have a child after the second handicapped child. Of these 10 families, however, 5 already had at least 4 children. Adding the remaining 5 to the 9 above, only 14 out of 92 AO families exhibited some degree of restraint in having more children, probably because of the fear of having another handicapped child. But

Table 1.6 Non-AO deterrence: Number of AO families with healthy last child
No. of families

Kim Bang (29)	11
Thanh Khe (15)	8
Phu Cat (48)	26
Total	45

Table 1.7 Non-AO deterrence: Number and size of AO families with healthy last child
No. of families

	Kim Bang (29)	Thanh Khe (15)	Phu Cat (48)	Total
2 children	0	2	5	7
3 children	1	3	6	10
4 children	0	0	6	6
5 or more children	10	3	9	22
Total	11	8	26	45

generally the AO-Dioxin contamination alone did not generate enough impact to change the parents' behaviour, confirming Madame Ngyuen Thi Binh's observation.

One more consideration is needed before confirming this conclusion: the AO families who stopped having more children following a healthy child. This consideration helps us see how prominent the deterrent effect could be of the "burden" of having additional children at all, whether healthy or not. Tables 1.6 and 1.7 show the AO families whose last child was healthy. Of the 45 AO families for whom the last child was healthy, 28 families had at least 4 children (including 1 or more handicapped children). "We can't have any more children, because we are poor" is the standard answer. The burden on the household budget is at least as potent as the fear of having another handicapped child in deterring the parents from having more children.

One striking conclusion from these observations is that the AO families who altered their behaviour because of the handicapped children are exceptional. There is no distinct difference separating the AO families in Viet Nam from other families with low income. The families wish to have children for the sake of affection, securing labour resources, or as future insurance,¹² and stop having children beyond the limits imposed by the capacity of the household budget. The conclusion is striking because the devastating effect of Agent Orange-Dioxin vanishes in the more mundane problem of poverty. What are the AO families really victims of?

The real puzzle may be: why have the adverse effects of the Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination not been recognized as such and induced changes in behaviour among the very families who embrace them?

A hint may lie in the frequent use by the AO families of the expression *so phan*, roughly meaning “fate”. Their responses to many speculative questions, such as “what would you have liked to do, if all the children were healthy?”, were sprinkled with *so phan*. For them, the expression *so phan* is the most succinct explanation of, and the only way of living with, things over which they have no control.

After all, the majority of the AO families are also victims of the war. The war, as mentioned earlier, was one without the conventional distinction of “front” and “rear”. It brought into their daily lives everything that went with the actual fighting – deaths, missing relatives and siblings, hunger, atrocities. The war, for some, lasted much longer than the duration of their youth. Their lives were littered with difficulties whose origins were as untraceable and inexplicable as the unwanted entry of the war into their lives. If difficulties are insurmountable, then the will to trace their origins or causes can easily wither. People needed to devise ways by which to live with these difficulties. The war itself had prepared these families to live with difficulties. The handicapped children are an extension of these difficulties. There is very little hope of a cure for many of the ailments that the handicapped children exhibit, such as cerebral palsy or Down’s syndrome. The parents’ will to trace the origins of these ailments is numbed, thus deepening their reliance on *so phan*. Thus the AO families who altered their behaviour because of the fear of Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination are *exceptional*, in that they at least exhibited the will to prevent the dictum of *so phan* from reaching yet another child.

There is another factor which may have helped perpetuate the dictum of *so phan* among the AO families: the “tradition” of attributing present hardship to “mistakes committed by the ancestors”. This too is a method, or a way, of facing difficulties over which individuals have no control. Unlike *so phan*, however, the “ancestors’ mistakes” is a much more personal reasoning, because it is a mistake committed by *their* ancestors and nobody else’s. By the same token, the “ancestors’ mistakes” is a way, also, of keeping the hardship all to themselves (see, for example, Maitre and Doray, 2006; Gammeltoft, 2006).

As shown in many rounds of interviews in the three districts, the AO families are well integrated into the local communities. While surrounded by curious neighbours, they accepted our presence and responded to our inquisitive questions with no apparent show of displeasure, discomfort, or agitation. The AO families appeared to be spared outright prejudice or

bias. Perhaps by exclusively relying on *so phan* and the “ancestors’ mistakes”, the AO families could embrace the hardship as being of their own making, thereby turning their presence into less of a threat to the community as a whole. This is likely to be another reason why there is very little incentive for the AO families, living in an isolated world of their own, to change their behaviour.

There is no “hard” evidence to substantiate such observations, but there is circumstantial evidence in the behaviour of the AO families. They rarely have contact among themselves. Of the 92 families we interviewed, only 4 in Kim Bang and Phu Cat knew each other. They know each other not because they share the same difficulties but because the heads of the families belonged to the same units on the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the war (the two Kim Bang families) and in the Cambodian campaign (the two Phu Cat families) after unification.

However, the reliance on *so phan* or the “ancestors’ mistakes” is not the making solely of, or reinforced by, the AO families. The initial encounter with the evidence of Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination in their children has much to do with their deepening reliance on the philosophy of *so phan*. Of the 92 families, almost none take their handicapped children to hospital on a regular basis, and they usually stop visits after the first or the second effort. One reason is the opportunity cost.¹³ Medical establishments with modern facilities are few, and often located at a one-day-trip distance. The absence of apparent benefits corresponding to such costs is discouraging enough. A Phu Cat parent, representing a great many others, testified: “I lost interest in going back to the hospital after they told me that my [son’s] health was damaged due to Agent Orange. I saw no hope for cure.” Perhaps a return visit or two may have opened up opportunities for him and for the doctors to explore ways by which to improve, if not cure, the unfortunate health condition. Yet the initial visit only deepens the sense of helplessness, and the reliance on *so phan* and the “ancestors’ mistakes”, and thus deprives the parent of the opportunity to weigh the benefits of frequent visits against the costs.

The presence of those who *are* in a position to help the AO families may also be problematic. These are what may be termed the “assistant physicians” who are something like paramedics, somewhere between medical doctors and nurses in terms of skills and qualifications. They receive very basic medical training in a two-year medical vocational school. In each of the local community clinics, consisting of 10 or so staff, these assistant physicians are considered second after the doctor, who is usually a graduate of one of the dozen or so medical universities in Viet Nam.

These assistant physicians are local people who were born and raised in the community where they now serve. The only time they spent out-

side the community is during the two years of medical vocational school training. Usually they sit in the community clinic, perhaps the only public facility, serving a steady flow of visitors. They also often make rounds within the community, visiting the homes of the sick and healthy alike. As medical professionals, the kinds of treatment they are allowed to perform are limited to simple tasks such as administering certain medications or taking blood pressure. For anything beyond this, they have to send the patients to the district health centre.

As nearly all of them concurred, they chose this career because they “wanted to do something for the people”. At an average age of 45, assistant physicians all through our three surveyed districts know the affairs of the community literally from inside out. They listen to complaints about family affairs, and offer suggestions on how to deal with schoolteachers or even the police. Their detailed knowledge of the community residents is staggering.

One assistant physician in one community makes a powerful impact in ways beyond simply providing health services. For medical doctors, the assistant physician is the “connoisseur” of community affairs, indispensable to their services. For local residents the assistant physician, though on a lower echelon of the medical establishment, is probably the only source of authoritative information concerning their health.

However, there is no apparent evidence that the assistant physicians have served as a catalyst among AO families for seeking better and further medical services and advice after their children were diagnosed as having dioxin-induced ailments, or that they promote collective efforts among the AO families to improve their livelihood. There is, also, little sign that these assistant physicians collaborate among themselves, across the boundaries of the communities they work in, for the improvement of the AO families’ lives.

The problem is not that the assistant physician takes the issue of Agent Orange lightly. He or she does take it seriously, as many of them volunteered to testify: “Agent Orange contamination is the most serious issue in my community.” The problem is, rather, that these committed medical workers take the issue seriously in a manner much like the AO families do. What they mean by “serious” is that the AO families have no way of evading their plight or improving their conditions. With all the good will and sympathy they could muster, many of these assistant physicians try to protect the AO families. In their attempts, however, they embrace not only the AO families but also the families’ self-protective rhetoric of *so phan* and the “ancestors’ mistakes”. This sort of alliance between the families and the assistant physicians serves only to reinforce the isolated world of the former. The implications of this isolation are profound.

The resilience of the “war legacy”

As long as the AO families remain within, and protected by, the world of *so phan* and the “ancestors’ mistakes”, and as long as they embrace the damage inflicted by Agent Orange-Dioxin contamination as being of their own making, very few significant messages will emerge for the other community residents. The residents reciprocate, or honour, this self-imposed seclusion by maintaining their indifference to the possible causes of the AO families’ plight, and by extension to anything remotely indicative of the causes. The dikes along the irrigation channels and winding footpaths between the rice paddies in Phu Cat or Nam Ha are literally littered with empty bags of currently used pesticides and herbicides, yet they attract no residents’ attention. The villagers in Phu Cat continue to rely on well water and river water for drinking, bathing, and irrigating the rice paddies all around Nui Ba Mountain. In urban Thanh Khe district, too, they fish the contaminated ponds off Da Nang airport, whose dioxin levels were found by recent research to be still alarmingly high (Boivin et al., 2007). Birth defects and other Agent-Orange-induced ailments, in the eyes of the unaffected community residents, are an accident occasioned by the prolonged war against the United States. And as there is no more war, there is nothing that could involve them in a similar “accident”.

The basic view that Agent Orange and the ailments it has induced are an “accident” is also shared by the wider society of Viet Nam as a whole. With the stress upon the need to increase agricultural productivity, the use of chemicals in the agrarian sector has multiplied. As reported in the chapter by Tran and Pham in this volume, the increased amount of agrochemicals in use has accompanied neglect of their quality and the basic rules for their use and maintenance. The Viet Nam news media have since 2003 been reporting incidents of chemical poisoning in rural Viet Nam. By calling the communities with high instances of cancers the “cancer villages”, these reports grabbed the attention of still agriculture-dominated Viet Nam.

However, what is conspicuous in the news coverage on chemical-induced cancers is the absence of conscious efforts to link the incidents to Agent Orange. Agent Orange as *another* example of chemical abuse seems to escape the villagers’ and reporters’ attention. One exceptional case in which a “cancer village” is linked to Agent Orange makes the absence of other such reports that much more prominent (*Thanh Nien News*, 2004).

In fact, there have been many “accidents” of chemical abuse resulting in human disasters. The incident at Union Carbide’s Bhopal plant in India in 1984 emitted an immense volume of chemicals, killing close to

5,000 people and leaving an untold number seriously affected. Another at a small chemical factory in Seveso, Italy, in 1976 released a large amount of dioxin into the atmosphere and contaminated the adjacent areas. Countermeasures such as slaughtering tens of thousands of livestock were necessary to prevent dioxin from entering the food chain. If these accidents can be dismissed as simply the making of a mismanaged factory operation, there is another incident that comes much closer to Agent Orange.

This incident took a long time before it was recognized as a major human health threat, and dramatizes the fact that threats to human life could be so easily embedded in the living environment. The elimination of Times Beach, a small town in Missouri in the United States, is the case in point. To solve a dust problem, the town authorized a civilian to use waste oil mixed with other waste to spray some of its roads, starting in 1971. The spraying lasted until 1976. The other waste came, as it turned out, from the facility of a chemical company which had been used for the production of Agent Orange. There was no sign throughout the development of the incident that anyone had understood the significance of the 1970 announcement, mentioned earlier, by the Secretaries of Agriculture, Health, Education and Welfare, Interior, and Defense. Soon after the first spraying, scores of horses were found dead. Nonetheless, it took another 10 years, and numerous animal deaths and illnesses among the residents, before the US Environmental Protection Agency finally declared the presence of immensely high dioxin levels in the town. Soon after, the population abandoned the town.¹⁴

There is something about eye-catching “accidents” such as these which prevents their lessons from being shared by a broader population beyond the actual victims. The more dramatic each accident is, the more distinct and *exceptional* each becomes. One result is that each incident is isolated from the others, thereby limiting our ability to generate general lessons from one case, or even to see the links among similar cases. Another result may be the tendency to see each of these incidents as having its own distinct group of victims, prompting us to continue in blissful indifference to the fact that we may not be safely away from the sites or occasions of such incidents. The Viet Nam War is an eye-catching, but ungeneralized, “accident”. The Agent Orange-Dioxin problem is the legacy of an accident which refuses to penetrate the minds of many who are not part of the distinct group of victims, the AO families.

There have been warnings against the individual threats to life emanating from the population explosion, food shortages, climate change, excess use of fossil fuels, and pandemics. There have been few or no warnings to disturb the blissful ignorance which perpetuates our thinking that we are *still* safe from actual encroachment by these threats, except for one by a

group of scientists. In the preface of a book with the subtitle *The 30-Year Update*, the Meadowses, the original members of the Rome Club's "Limits to Growth" group, have this to say:

Sadly, we believe the world will experience overshoot and collapse in global resources and emissions . . . The growth phase will be welcomed and celebrated, even long after it has moved into unsustainable territory (this we know, because it has already happened). The collapse will arrive very suddenly, much to everyone's surprise. And once it has lasted for some years, it will become increasingly obvious that the situation before the collapse was totally unsustainable . . . (Meadows, Randers, and Meadows, 2004: xxi–xxii)

The abuse of chemicals in agriculture and elsewhere has been masked by the sustainable growth it seems to promote. There has been only a gradual realization that the danger could well be indiscriminate. Thus if any lesson is to be drawn from the Agent Orange disaster, the first step must be the liberation of Agent Orange-Dioxin from its narrow status as the legacy of the Viet Nam War.

Notes

1. The following observations are based on our research over the period December 2004 to March 2007. Throughout the text we have freely used the interview records we collected without specifying the names, dates, or places where such interviews took place.
2. The spraying operation was called Operation Ranch Hand. For a full picture of the operation see Buckingham (1982).
3. Agent Pink is said to be 100 per cent TCDD, but the amount used in the war has not yet been specified (Stellman et al., 2003).
4. The full name is *Report to Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs on the Association between Adverse Effects and Exposure to Agent Orange*.
5. One important fact is that the whole idea of linking Agent Orange with certain diseases did not attract public attention until the late 1970s, even in the United States. Many of the returning veterans may have had little or no basis on which to judge what may have caused their health problems (Young, 2002: 158).
6. There are massive volumes of publications and homepages chronicling many of the developments concerning these two rounds of lawsuits. A glimpse can be seen in Smoger (undated).
7. Scott-Clark and Levy (2003) quotes 650,000 for the surviving victims and over 500,000 dead among the second and third generations of Vietnamese.
8. Cited in a letter to Senator Daschele (9 September 1988) by Dr James Clary, a former government scientist who prepared the final report on Operation Ranch Hand (Zumwalt, 1990: 6).
9. Calculated from Arthur H. Westing (1984: 7, especially table 1-2).
10. Also, Le Cao Dai (2004) offers a grim view of the conditions under which the medical personnel had to operate, with almost no sophisticated equipment, sufficient medical supplies, or even food, while constantly moving and under enemy surveillance on the trail.

11. The exceptions are those who were able to provide evidence of their support for the unification efforts, such as membership in the National Liberation Front. See, for the criteria for certification for receiving some form of support, such as a pension, "Ordinance on preferential treatment for revolutionary activists, fallen heroes and their families, war invalids, diseased soldiers, resistance war activists and people with meritorious services to the revolution".
12. Harvey Leibenstein (1974), for example, calls these "consumption utility", "work or income utility", and "security utility".
13. How restraining this opportunity cost may be is well documented by Truong Quang Dat (2007).
14. We do not go into the specific details of these incidents here. However, Robert Allen's (2004) *Dioxin War* provides an outline of each and the underlying issues common to all, such as chemical companies' denial and unsuspecting users of the chemicals.

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2

The ageing community: Human insecurity in a “developed” society

Satoshi Watanabe

Introduction

This chapter, unlike the others in this volume, explores an issue related to human security in a “developed region” in Asia. This is the issue of how people in a developed area construct and evaluate their life choices when they, in contrast to the expectations of most developed regions, do not expect any immediate solution to the human security problems they face. As the Introduction to this book demonstrates, one of the normative bases of human security studies is to look at life practices in terms of people’s own evaluations of a “secure life” or a “life worth pursuing”¹ based on their efforts to manage their local resources and continually re-fashion their human relationships. These are central to any consideration of the security or insecurity in people’s lives.

It is from this standpoint that the present chapter examines the life histories of villagers in Maki,² one of the very small *kasō* (in Japanese, “depopulated” and consequently composed mainly of the older generation) villages in Japan, located in the hills. Due to the advanced age of most of the remaining 20 villagers and the location of the village, people in Maki are facing many sources of insecurity, such as the unsustainability of their farming, increasing medical expenses, and poor access to hospitals. Among these insecurities, this chapter explores how the villagers in Maki can no longer sustain their communal farming practices because of the ongoing ageing and irreversible depopulation of the village. Through observations and interviews conducted in my one-year fieldwork from

*Human insecurity in East Asia, Umegaki, Thiesmeyer, and Watabe (eds),
United Nations University Press, 2009, ISBN 978-92-808-1164-3*

March 2005 to April 2006, I sought to document and examine the ways in which the villagers evaluate their changing life conditions and have been attempting to cope with “deterioration”, or the progress towards the disappearance of their communal farming practices, and to reorganize these practices. This chapter will provide an analysis of these two phenomena, based on the approach that the human dynamics mentioned above provide important clues to the level of human security in a rural area of Japan and its perception by villagers facing economic and possibly social extinction.

Under the current conditions of *kasō*, the villagers have begun to ask themselves several interrelated questions. What do the communal farming practices mean to them? If they need to abandon their farming practices, when and how should they do so? The villagers cannot agree on these questions, mainly because their evaluations of the current situation shift, and are unhappy that their attempts at reconstructing their farming practices to suit the current conditions do not conform to any single normative basis.

In Maki, the construction, evaluation, and choice of alternatives for “a life worth pursuing” are fundamental problems. But we must give up presupposing that people can choose their actions on the basis of what is worth pursuing. Karl Polanyi pointed out the difficulty of constructing a life worth pursuing in discussing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “Life is man’s missed opportunity.” He continued:

Hamlet is about the human condition. We all live, insofar as we refuse to die. But we are not resolved to live in all the essential respects in which life invites us. (Polanyi, 1954: 350)

What Polanyi thus explored in *Hamlet*, I explore in a hamlet in Japan. I will argue that life in *kasō* villages in Japan clearly exemplifies human insecurity in the life of people who cannot completely, or independently, form and choose a life worth pursuing but, nevertheless, strive to find ways to live.

Kasō in Japan

Kasō and “deteriorating” communities

Since the 1960s a great number of rural Japanese villages have faced rapid ageing and depopulation. This phenomenon is called *kasō*. The statistics show that rural villages in Japan are disappearing at the rate of 350 per year. There were 142,377 villages in Japan in 1980; the number had decreased to 135,179 by 2000. Concurrently, the number of villages that

have fewer than 10 households increased from 13,869 in 1980 to 29,955 in 2000 (Nishida, 2006: 27).

Kaso started to become a conspicuous phenomenon in rural Japan during the post-war period of rapid economic growth. Because of the widening income gap between the industrial sector in urban areas and the agricultural sector, a great number of farmers and their children – their potential inheritors – abandoned farming and moved to the cities. As a result, the number of farm households declined from 6.18 million in 1950 to 2.85 million in 2005. The number of people engaged in farming fell from 19.32 million in 1955 to 3.35 million in 2005. As of 2005, over-65-year-old farmers account for 58 per cent of the farming population (Hashimoto, 2000: 109–110; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, 2007). Kenji Hashimoto calls the current phase “the final stage of the dismantling of the farming class” (Hashimoto, 2000: 132).

There is a fundamental shift in character behind these changes: *kaso* went from depopulation by “moving out” to depopulation by “dying out”, or, as demographers put it, from being a social to being a natural decline. People who have remained in rural Japan are now ageing and dying. Many villages are now on the verge of extinction. These villages are called *genkai-shuraku* (marginal villages) which can no longer reproduce their population at a sustainable (replacement) level.

Numerous researchers and fieldworkers have pointed out that one of the biggest social impacts caused by *kaso* is the “deterioration of a community or a communal order”. Yutaka Araoke argues that a *kaso* community is one that can no longer provide tangible and intangible goods and services for its individuals or families. He reports that the deterioration of the support base for agriculture threatens the lives of those in the *kaso* areas, citing the inability to maintain farmland because of the lack of population to engage in cooperative cultivation, exchange of labour, and mutual protection against wild animals. This deterioration has led to an increasing abandonment of arable land (Araoke, 2005: 230–234).

“Deterioration” of rural communities as a policy issue

The “deterioration” of rural communities presents itself as a policy issue within three different perspectives. The first considers the rural community as a “cushion”. This perspective is found among the advocates of the market economy and globalization who consider that deterioration of the community is an outgrowth of economic development. For them, deterioration is a problem only when it creates the human security issue of jobless farmers who have no place to go and, as a result, the social costs to support them increase. The rural community, in this view, is a cushion for those who are too old to change jobs or adapt themselves to

market-competitive farming. In this sense, the community can be seen as a tool to assist in the transition or adjustment to the market principle as long as it does not damage the performance of the national economy (see, for example, Hayami and Godo, 2002: 293).

The second perspective regards the rural community as a point of resistance to the market economy. This group includes a great variety of people, ranging from the right (neo-traditionalists and nativists) to the left (alternative developmentalists). Their concerns are about how farmers can mitigate the penetration of the market principle, which may bring its own insecurity, and whether or not they can develop their autonomy within it. This position presumes that part of the answer lies in the life-style of a community that would be able to nurture and experiment with an alternative way of life. For example, Torigoe (1997: i–v) insists that a rural community can provide an alternative vision to the contemporary market-penetrated society. In this view, the “deterioration of community” means depriving the community of the imaginative resources to envisage alternatives to contemporary Japan, and for this reason it should be halted.

The third view is related to the second one. In this, there are people who identify the rural community as a “reservoir of specific values” – environmental or cultural values – not only for farmers but also for those who do not live in rural areas. Thus rural residents ought to be supported in order to sustain these values. This view argues that non-rural people also enjoy many “by-products” which agricultural life produces – for example, beautiful landscapes provide opportunities for recreation; rice fields act as water reservoirs to protect biodiversity, and function as “natural dams” that prevent floods; communal customs and “traditional” festivals signify human diversity and give urban people peace of mind. Therefore, their “deterioration” is a serious threat to the security of these “public goods”. Some suggest that for this reason farmers should not miss any opportunity to display the value of their rural existence.

Despite the differences among these three perspectives, the decaying rural communities are the target of common policy goals, uniformly called *kasseika* or “revitalization” policies: for example, the well-known “One Village One Product” campaign. On the one hand, the search for factors influencing, and conditions for, revitalization efforts may have helped liberate rural residents from their stereotyped status as the “falling-behind” or the “casualties” of a vibrant market economy. The search has at times uncovered resilient communal customs and some innovative individuals who support rural life against its own “deterioration” (see, for example, Hobo, 1996).

On the other hand, however, one consequence of this search for the factors for successful “revitalization” is the imposition of a sort of func-

tionalist view upon rural life: the view that in so far as rural life persists, there must be a “structure” supporting it (see for a similar criticism Nakata, 2001). Worse, the residents (or a few representatives of them) may come to be viewed as coherent actors or decision-makers even when their present situation does not allow them a range of choices or the expectation of improvement.

What is missing in research on the “revitalization” theme is a close examination of the residents’ lives and their own narratives about them. These can reveal a complex process of navigation through ambiguous and often conflicting alternatives, with equally ambiguous and conflicting ideas about the goals of rural residents. To put it simply, in order to understand the actual human security issues in rural areas of Japan, efforts are needed to capture life in *kasō* communities “as lived”. What follows is such an effort.

My fieldwork consisted mainly of two types of interviews. I interviewed most of the villagers while I participated in farming or other activities in the village with them. I also conducted two- to three-hour semi-structured interviews with seven people, often as many as three times each. When I spoke with the informants, I tried to show them my interpretations of or doubts about their narratives, in order to sustain and deepen our dialogue. This was not only because the informants’ way of modifying, denying, or sometimes being angry with my interpretations was in itself valuable information. It was also because I hoped to create “our” common interpretations, however temporary and fragile they might be.

Maki: Profile of a *kasō* village

Kitagawa Township

Kitagawa Township, where Maki village is located, is one of the hinterlands of the Tokyo metropolis. It is in Kanagawa prefecture, approximately 80 kilometres west of Tokyo and two hours away from the city centre by train. About 90 per cent of the area is mountainous. The growing of “Kitagawa tea” and tourism are the major sources of income.

Due to the *kasō* phenomenon in recent decades, however, the farming population of Kitagawa Township declined from 2,114 in 1955 to 493 in 2000. Most of the farmers are members of part-time farm households and have other jobs that earn much more than farming. The land area for tea farms in Kitagawa Township is a quarter of the total tea area of Kanagawa, but in recent years the increased abandonment of farmland has become a concern for the local government.

The peak of tea growing was in the 1960s and early 1970s, and it has since followed a course of continuous decline. There is one common expression by which the farmers in Kitagawa recall the past: “Back when we harvested tea three times a year, we could earn enough for our children’s schooling, for living expenses, and even for savings.” Tea growing in Kitagawa Township began in 1923, the year when the great Kanto earthquake hit the Tokyo metropolitan area and there was flooding in Kitagawa. These two disasters destroyed nearly 40 ha of fields and 300 ha of forest. At that time, most of the farmers were making their living by raising silkworms and producing charcoal from wood – two sources of income that depend on forests and fields. The damage to their livelihoods was tremendous.

In an attempt to revive the local economy, the local government and the Agricultural Society of Kitagawa promoted the growing of tea, and provided seeds for tea trees. They found that the misty weather, lower temperatures, and fewer hours of sunlight in Kitagawa were suitable for tea farming. Tea growing gradually caught on, and 20 tea-farming villages built their own workshops for the primary processing of tea.³

However, as the *kaso* progressed and the price of tea fell, the villagers faced difficulties in maintaining their workshops. Due to this situation of insecurity in their livelihood and production, in 2000 all the workshops were integrated into one tea-processing plant on the local government’s initiative. Now the tea-farming villages mainly concentrate on the harvesting of tea; the processing is all done in the new integrated tea-processing plant operated by farmers chosen from each village.

Maki village

Maki is one of these remaining tea-farming villages in Kitagawa Township. It is on a hill 200 m above sea level that is as steep as a regular ski slope. Part of Maki’s farmland bears the official warning “Danger Zone – Steep Incline”. From the base of the hill it takes 10–15 minutes to reach its top on foot, on a road snaking across the hill. About 3.5 ha of tea farms are spread over the top of the hill. All six of Maki’s remaining households have roughly the same size of farmland, with an average of 0.58 ha. This size is common to many other mountainous areas in Japan.

The total population is 20 people, and the average age is 56.8 years old. Seven persons are over 65 years old. More than half the population will be over 65 within the next 10 years. The youngest is a 13-year-old girl and the second youngest is a 20-year-old man. The household size is also shrinking: in 1960 there was still a population of 40 persons among 7 households.

The households in Maki are classified as “part-time farm households”.

The men go to work outside the village and help with farming during the holidays, and women engage in farming. Because the income from tea growing is extremely low, salaries or pensions are the financial basis of their households. What is of more urgent concern to them is that none of the families has anyone to inherit their farms or to live nearby and care for them in old age. Some of the remaining young people in their twenties have already declared to their parents that they do not want to be farmers. Others have moved out and live in the cities.

Yet both insiders and outsiders still represent Maki as a coherent unit. Maki as a community gives a sense of identity and territory to the villagers. They like to say “Maki has a lot of patience”, or “people in Maki are conservative so they keep to the conventions”. But Maki has not always been unchanged or isolated. As described below, the institutions and social relations in Maki have undergone change fairly continuously.

Tea growing in Maki

The villagers identify tea growing and the practice of *kyodo-sagyo*, or cooperative work, as the most important of their communal activities. Though there are other communal activities, such as ceremonies to commemorate the dead, seasonal festivals, the annual village trip, and the *Kako-group* (a women’s group that performs side jobs),⁴ they give a special priority to the two activities of tea growing and *kyodo-sagyo*. They say that tea growing and *kyodo-sagyo* are the central features of their lives. Both these activities are often raised in serious discussion as to what they mean to the villagers.

Today, the economic importance of agriculture is gradually disappearing from Maki because the income from tea growing has fallen to almost nothing since the 1990s. When the price of tea started to fall, the villagers initially tried to increase their income by expanding their farms. The area of farmland in Maki expanded from 2.8 ha in the 1960s to 3.8 ha in 1980. But this strategy failed. The steep incline of the land prevented the mechanization of farming; further, the villagers were facing a labour shortage due to the ongoing *kasō*. As a result, rather than expanding their tea-growing land, the villagers started to shift to growing vegetables or fruit, or they abandoned their farms altogether. In the meantime, many adult males had already sought and found jobs in the cities, such as at supermarkets and electric power or food companies.

We clearly see from the above that tea growing in this village provides no human security in terms of income or future sustainability. A young villager who does not engage in farming said to me, “Tea growing is a hobby of the old. I’ve never thought I wanted to do it. Why are you so

interested in it?” His derogatory use of the word “hobby” is a good description of the current situation. All the villagers know that if they had another job instead of the time-consuming tea growing, they could earn more money. Tea growing is economically “irrational”. But the low economic importance of agriculture does not mean that tea growing is easy. There is a great deal of work involved in taking care of tea plants, including the use of heavy machinery, from the stage of fertilizing and disinfecting all the way through pruning to harvesting. The villagers often complain about this heavy workload, and most of them have chronic aches in their legs or backs.

At the initial stage of my fieldwork I wanted to know why the villagers continue with the tea farming despite the low profit and high health risks that demonstrate their level of insecurity. I soon realized that tea was something special to them. Once I was taken around the tea farms by a female villager in her car. She explained in detail about every farm that we visited: who owned the farm, the difference between the natural and the improved varieties of tea trees, and how the soil affects them. But she refused to take me to her own tea farm. She said, “I’ll be embarrassed because I didn’t take good enough care of the tea trees today.” Another day she told me that the sight of even a few dead leaves on the tea trees made her feel embarrassed. Yet the villagers do not care how many dead leaves are on the vegetable plants. Only the tea trees bring out the villagers’ anxiety to do their best.

They often explained that tea is so important a symbol of their pride and identity that they can tolerate no mistakes. Tea represents Maki’s collective memory. According to the villagers, because Maki was the birthplace of Kitagawa tea, where the first experiment in tea growing was conducted, the villagers in Maki have played a leading role among Kitagawa tea farmers. For them, the history of Maki is the history of success in tea growing. They said no matter what kind or degree of trouble arose, they managed it throughout by cooperating among themselves. This collective memory is usually interpreted by the (older) villagers to mean that they are expected to perform perfectly and follow the past conventions of tea growing very carefully.

In the first phase of my fieldwork I was inclined to accept this explanation. However, I soon realized that the villagers often questioned their own explanations, or even sneered at themselves. I began to find that the question – what is tea growing to them? – itself is a painful one for the villagers to answer. This is because the question is closely connected to the fundamental problem of how they should conceive and reconstruct their communal (farming) practices in Maki under the current insecurity of *kaso*. Currently everything related to tea growing is under discussion and no statement is accepted without question by the villagers. Tea grow-

ing is not simply something that has a kind of culturally determined value to which the villagers give priority over economic values, nor does tea growing represent a “pre-modern” mentality of which something precious to them still remains. Rather, the villagers are now constructing and evaluating the value of tea growing in their daily lives and in their daily and conflictual negotiations about tea and their future. Yet rather than being only a product of their contemporary dilemma, this constant discussion and negotiation are very similar in structure, and perhaps in purpose, to *kyodo-sagyo*. This is what I shall analyse next.

Kyodo-sagyo: A communal practice in Maki

Kyodo-sagyo (cooperative work) is a kind of labour exchange. Each family is responsible for its own tea growing, but there are some tasks which are too heavy for one family to manage on its own, such as disinfection, pruning, and harvesting. Four women and four retired men or men on leave from their other jobs work together on each family's farm in turn, and cover the work expenses for each other. The expense (payment) for labour is 1,800 yen per hour (approximately US\$15).

Kyodo-sagyo is a relatively new “tradition” invented in 1960. According to the records remaining in Maki, prior to instituting the *kyodo-sagyo* system, each villager in Maki hired mainly family members as seasonal labour. However, as Japan's economy continued to expand, their wages increased. In order to respond to this increase and secure a stable, “intimate”, and cheap source of labour, the villagers created the *kyodo-sagyo* system. The villagers now pride themselves on their *kyodo-sagyo* as a symbol of communal integrity and mutual assistance. I often heard the villagers praise *kyodo-sagyo*: for example, “It represents Maki's spirit of reciprocity and is the symbol of mutual assistance”, or “This new tradition has enabled us to do what I couldn't do alone. This is Maki's virtue.” It is worth noting, too, that *kyodo-sagyo* also provides the villagers with a space and time in which to meet with each other on a friendly or purposive footing.

However, it may be worth pointing out that some villagers anticipated my interpretation of *kyodo-sagyo* and warned me not to see it as a “volunteer organization”. Instead, they wanted me to understand that *kyodo-sagyo* was “a carefully planned system” to fill the labour shortage. According to them, I should not overlook the fact that *kyodo-sagyo* is also a network of *contracts*. The fact that labour is always paid for is clear evidence of this.

The immediate reason why they warned me not to misinterpret *kyodo-sagyo* is that some villagers had complaints about some of the previous research that had been done by local government officials or even TV

reporters from the local news. According to one informant, these outsiders were eager to conclude in nostalgic fashion that *kyodo-sagyo* was merely the old-fashioned village practice of “mutual assistance”, without trying to understand further. No matter how much the villagers explained, the researchers never gave up their own interpretation. As a result, some villagers insisted that *kyodo-sagyo* was “misunderstood” as a mere embodiment of “the volunteer spirit”.

More importantly, the same as for tea growing, this warning showed me that there was some difference of opinion in the village on the problem of how to interpret *kyodo-sagyo*. In short, the question of whether *kyodo-sagyo* is based on something like a “moral economy” or on a planned system is crucial for the villagers. If *kyodo-sagyo* is seen as a “moral” duty to assist each other, the villagers will not be able to dissolve its current form very easily. By contrast, if it is a planned network of contracts, the villagers can, at least in theory, reorganize it, depending upon their needs. In response to this question, the villagers do not have clear answers. Throughout my fieldwork, as I show later, the villagers’ own evaluation of *kyodo-sagyo* appeared to be as shifting and unstable as their evaluation of the value of tea growing in the present situation.

All the villagers acknowledge that maintaining the status quo – maintaining the current level of tea production and the current scale of *kyodo-sagyo* – is impossible due to the ongoing phenomenon of *kaso*. In fact, an improvement in the *kaso* situation is no longer expected. In other words, *kaso* is now a given. A villager who appeared to want to preserve tea growing turned out to believe that the deterioration of *kyodo-sagyo* was unavoidable, and gave the opinion that the tea growing itself would have to disappear. Another informant said: “If we do nothing, we will be destroying ourselves.” This was a common perception among the villagers.

Further, the labour force has been ever-decreasing due to ageing, while the burdens of farming and its health risks have been sharply increasing. One informant said, “Four or five people now have to do what seven or eight people did before. It’s physically and mentally burdensome and time-consuming.” Although the core members of the *kyodo-sagyo* used to be six women from each of six families, one died in 1990 and another retired due to a serious chronic illness in 2002, leaving only four members. Further, no new members joined the *kyodo-sagyo* during that period (1990–2002). From 1960 to 1985 the average age of a woman’s retirement from *kyodo-sagyo* was 57.5 years old, and the average age of the six women in 1960, when *kyodo-sagyo* was instituted, was only 34. Today the average age of the four women who still engage in *kyodo-sagyo* is 51, and the two oldest are already 57 and 55. These two do not have anyone to take over their work when they stop.

The absence of successors who can replace the aged now means that any “officially acceptable” timing for retirement from agriculture has vanished. Without a younger generation, a villager can neither judge the time to retire nor advise others on the proper time to do so. The villagers have to judge the right time by themselves. Their retirement, their withdrawal from agriculture itself, leaves tea growing unpreserved. This means that the insecurity of the ageing villagers can only deepen in the future of tea-growing agriculture in Maki.

The contexts of the field research

Even though I could hear the villagers voicing opinions that differed from previous research on Maki, I still would not claim that I succeeded in hearing the villagers’ “honest” voices where previous researchers could not. Rather, I can say that my “position” in the field, as a graduate student who had almost no power, especially power to influence policy-making, allowed the villagers to behave and speak differently from when they talked with local government officials or TV reporters. This issue raises several interesting points related to policy science and fieldwork. First, without examining the fieldworker’s own position we cannot analyse field data or write about the field. Second, when we take into consideration the current situation in which the (re)combination between policy research and fieldwork has emerged (see Umegaki, 2006: 127–156; Sluka and Robbin, 2007: 1–18), we see that we need more careful analysis of the current academic and social contexts in which fieldwork and the fieldworker are now situated.

It is highly likely that the villagers used me, a fieldworker, to make their own statements to each other as to their interpretations of tea growing and *kyodo-sagyo*. I was often requested by villagers to recite my current interpretations or evaluations of Maki village. Although their reactions to my comments were varied, it is worth noting that when the villagers agreed with my comments, they often said “You should tell more about your comments to the other villagers”, or “It is just what I have always thought too. It is a pleasure that an outsider sees it the same way.” The real influence of my comments may have been slight, but it is undeniable that they sometimes seemed to the villagers to endorse some of their own opinions. Also, for this reason it is highly likely that the villagers attempted to guide my interpretation towards what they wanted it to be. They did this precisely so that I could give endorsement to a specific point of view, because, for them, I could be an outsider who knew “urban advanced life” or a student from a well-known university who could evaluate things “objectively” in my statements to other villagers. In this sense, regardless of his or her own wishes, a fieldworker

is at times obliged to enter into the dynamics of the field as a participant; or provides, for the informants, a kind of “capital” in the sense of either material or symbolic resources for the transfer or predominance of one kind of information or point of view.

One informant alluded to the fact that the villagers used different ways of explaining *kyodo-sagyo* depending upon their listeners. He said, “There are things which we shouldn’t tell outsiders. We don’t want to show them our troubles because they disgrace us. And there are things which are in our interest not to show.” On the other hand, when they wanted to receive a government subsidy which emphasized a high level of communal integration, the villagers promoted *kyodo-sagyo* in such a way as to conform to the stated requirement of demonstrating the closeness of their communal bonds. “Community” can thus be played upon in a stereotyped way according to people’s interests to help them to extract what they deem to be the necessary resources from outside interests.

Confronting *kaso*

Two conflicting “agreements”

In Maki we can observe two agreements which are honoured by the villagers in order to cope with the ongoing *kaso*. One is reducing the size of tea farms to 0.5 ha for each family (the “0.5 ha agreement”), and the other is the consensus to continue to maintain a certain size of tea farm (the official agreement in order to obtain a government subsidy). These two processes that seemingly conflict with each other are worth examining, because they clearly signify the villagers’ internal negotiations on tea growing and *kyodo-sagyo*.

In short, two different attitudes on the part of the villagers towards tea growing have emerged: one group is for reducing tea farms, and another group is for sustaining for tea farms as large as possible and for as long as time allows. However, the villagers have not actually divided into two opposing “parties” based on clear visions or interests. Rather, as the next section demonstrates, their attitudes and choices are often temporary and characterized by indecisiveness. Change and continuation in Maki, both of which create the new contexts for the villagers’ lives, accompany these continual investments of effort by the villagers and the interplay among them.

The event which the villagers regard as significant in starting these two agreements was the death of Mrs A in 1995. It apparently forced them to realize the insecurity of farming. After the death of his wife, Mr A, who worked for the electric company, remained in his house alone. Mr A’s

only son lived in another place and did not want to come back to Maki. Everyone knew that Mr A could not maintain all his fields alone, and that this problem needed to be resolved through “mutual help”. The villagers discussed the problem, and finally decided that part of Mr A’s farm would be rented by two other families and the *Kako-group* to grow vegetables instead of tea. Also, Mr A contracted with another family to cultivate and grow tea on his remaining farmland. This is called a “contract of cooperative cultivation”.

The death of Mrs A had two impacts. First, it was felt to be a kind of foreshadowing of the future by other families because Mr A’s solitary life after Mrs A’s death showed what the lives of the other villagers would be. They began more concretely to anticipate this sort of a future. Yet, second, it was also obvious that the villagers would not be able to respond in the same manner if many similar cases occurred. They knew that “mutual help” had serious limitations: all the families were experiencing the ageing process, so eventually they would not have enough “surplus” labour to help each other.

Two promises on land use

Before going on to examine the two differing agreements (reducing or maintaining farm size), it is necessary to explain two strict “customary” promises or rules that the villagers must keep in mind in making a decision on land usage. This is because all the decisions on farming in Maki must be based on these promises, and either one of the two will also support a villager’s point of view in negotiations.

First, a farm right next to someone else’s (which means most of the farms) must not be abandoned, because abandoned lands become breeding grounds of weeds and harmful pests. This promise requires the villagers to be always aware of their responsibility towards others in their practices. In this sense, it functions to prohibit the “privatization” of land.

Second, and more importantly, before changing their crops or abandoning their farmlands, the villagers must “express” to the other villagers what they want to do and get “permission” from them, even though what they grow in lieu of tea (or the choice to abandon cultivation) is in fact almost wholly the decision of each individual family. This is close to the system of “whole ownership”, as it is called by rural sociologists in Japan. “Whole ownership” was a type of customary law in which “private land should not be freely sold or bought without the consensus of the community” (Torigoe, 1985: 99). At first glance this promise to “express” one’s choice of cultivation may seem to signify a “surviving customary law”, something which often characterizes Japanese “traditional” villages; however, an examination of this rule shows it is more than that.

The villagers are now actually trying to manipulate the meaning of this second promise on the basis of their differing positions. The background to the villagers' persistently demanding this "expression of [cultivation] choice" is that there are highly conscious efforts not to go ahead with the "privatization" of land usage or completely individual decisions such as to abandon farmland. The "expression of choice" promise is certainly a customary law or "tradition" in the sense that the villagers identify its role as such. The villagers who wanted to maintain as large a tea farm as possible tended to emphasize the legitimacy of the "expression" promise. By contrast, those who were reluctant to keep large tea farms were apt to tell me that it was a "custom which would disappear as time goes on".

Reducing or sustaining farmland

First of all, to prepare for the future the villagers have agreed among themselves to decrease the land area of the tea farms to reduce the burden of maintaining them. They have gradually started to reduce the tea farms to 0.5 ha per family. In particular, they are trying to change from the lower-yield variety of tea tree to vegetables or fruit (ginkgo, blueberry, and mandarin orange). Farms on the steeper inclines are also the targets of reduction. The purpose of changing crops, however, is not to secure more profit. Profit is secondary in this case. Their main concern is reducing the burden of farming; thus the emphasis is on choosing crops that do not require much care. One villager emphasized that they were simply trying to make their lives easier. Of course, the villagers said that it would be ideal to find a substitute crop which would be both easier to care for *and* more profitable. But, in fact, even with the low-maintenance fruit trees that were planted in lieu of tea, the villagers often did not harvest the fruit and left many to rot on the trees.

On the other hand, there is another official agreement that the villagers will not plant trees such as cedars or Japanese cypress on their farms until at least the year 2010. This is ostensibly because the subsidy that Maki receives from the Japanese government requires them not to do so. This subsidy aims to promote and revitalize community agriculture in mountainous areas. Under this scheme, Maki received 400,000 yen to improve its roads in exchange for maintaining the farms as they were.

According to some of the villagers, this determination to continue farming until 2010 can be used to set up a "moratorium" period to think over how to reduce tea farms below the 0.5 ha line or how to give up farming. Even the villagers who are relatively keen to sustain tea farms think this agreement provides them with the time to explore ways to reorganize the community after tea growing, given the perception that communal farming practices will end. One villager emphasized, "Everyone should go along with each other. We should proceed carefully. Farm-

ing should not end without discussion. We should contemplate how we can remake Maki.” Most of the villagers place emphasis on the importance of discussion, as in this testimony. These two agreements to reduce farms in some cases and maintain farm size in others are the current products of the process of negotiation by the villagers. Through both, the villagers seek to find out what is better for them, though it means that they both collaborate and enter into conflicting discussions during the same period of time.

The combination of the “0.5 ha consensus” and the official agreement on land size for the subsidy forms new negotiations among the villagers. Sometimes they contest each other as to the interpretation of these agreements. For example, in January 2006 Mr and Mrs B “expressed” to the village that they would like to plant blueberries in one plot on their farm instead of tea. This “expression” caused great controversy among the villagers and was finally rejected; the chief reason for this was that many people regarded it as being against the 0.5 ha agreement, though Mr and Mrs B insisted that they had the right to plant something else. In fact, even if they had pulled up the tea trees in that plot, the tea-growing area of their farm would still have been over 0.5 ha. Mr and Mrs B felt that as long as they kept their tea farm over 0.5 ha, they could do whatever they wanted with the rest. But others did not think so. The problem was that the tea trees which Mr and Mrs B wanted to pull out were a highly prized variety called *Yabukita*, one of the most famous and profitable varieties of tea in Japan. Some villagers saw what Mr and Mrs B tried to do as being directly linked to giving up farming. Mr B insisted that the 0.5 ha agreement was to be used for nothing more than reducing the burden of farming and it did not say anything about which trees the villagers had to keep. But one villager explained, “Of course, that was the initial purpose. But we can also take it that this agreement is for sustaining tea farms even if they are small. So, pulling out *Yabukita* is bad because it’s the best variety.”

In this case, more than methods of tea growing or profit, it is the interpretations of the 0.5 ha agreement that are under discussion. One farmer tried to regard the consensus as only for reducing the burden of farming, but others attempted to reinterpret it as being intended to sustain the tea farms for as long as possible. It goes without saying that these interpretations are based on each villager’s view of what Maki should or will be like in the future.

Villagers’ narratives

The chief problem the villagers have to answer is to what extent the “deterioration” of their communal farming practices can be allowed. As

I have pointed out, this is because what underlies their thinking is the recognition that maintaining the status quo is impossible. Basically, the villagers cannot offer an answer to their current problems without considering their social and historical contexts. They must also consider the existence of others, ranging from family members and co-villagers to people in other villages and their own “ancestors”.

It is not surprising that the answers given are various; however, all of them are characterized by “indecisiveness” (*chuburarin*: literally, “being hung in the air”, as the villagers call it). In other words, the villagers’ narratives of their own present and future are marked by the absence of a framework within which to form and decide their choices. All the villagers expressed the view that they were anguishing among contesting values and feelings. They now cannot absolutely judge what is better or what they should do, so they also cannot give clear explanations or justifications for their suggested choices. Even their explanations of their practices never really convince the villagers themselves.

In this section, to capture the experiences of the *kasō* community as lived I will explore some individuals’ narratives of choice and life histories in an integrated manner, instead of dividing them up into several topics. In so doing I would like to demonstrate how deeply “indecisiveness” has penetrated into the narratives of the villagers. All the villagers earnestly attempted to give me their explanations of what they did and what they wanted to do, and the resulting narratives are all born of their efforts to navigate through their ambivalent feelings and contesting values. However, these narrative attempts were often followed by comments that subverted their own explanations. All the narratives were accompanied by “but” or “however”.

Mr A

“My opinions change every day.” Since the death of his wife, Mr A, a 62-year-old man (in 2005), has maintained his farms through cooperative cultivation with other families and by renting out land to other families and the *Kako-group*. The reason for starting with Mr A is that he articulated most of the problems in Maki very well, and the “indecisiveness” that appeared in his narrative is typical of the villagers in Maki. This indecisiveness is so characteristic of his statements that he talked as if he were constantly backing off from his previous statements.

In recent years Mr A has often researched how to make tea growing more attractive, using various media such as magazines, books, and the internet. He knows the present “solution” to sustaining his farmlands will not continue for too long because the other cooperating families have many of their own problems. Furthermore, he cannot ignore the

voices that insist the villagers should not continue with the contract of cooperative cultivation. He examined various “model cases”, and finally reached the conclusion that the worst enemy for him is “the steep slopes”. He began to build concrete pavements to smooth out part of his farms. He never told me how much this work cost, but it must have been millions of yen. He often tries to persuade the other villagers to make their slopes flatter, even if the area of their farms is reduced to half. By so doing, he believes that the villagers will be more able to facilitate mechanization, thus reducing the physical burden of tea growing. And if the price of tea were to rise, there would then be the hope that they could continue tea growing.

It is significant that Mr A connects the sustaining of tea growing with the “integrity” of Maki. According to him, if tea growing is revived the villagers can recapture their “integrity”. Mr A knows that other families will face the same problem as he did, and he also sees other villagers begin to consider countermeasures to cope with the ongoing *kaso*. For Mr A, this situation clearly means Maki is losing its “integrity”. Here, the purpose of sustaining tea growing as a communal farming practice is to allow the villagers to continue sharing the same orientation.

Mr A is seemingly enthusiastic about sustaining tea growing. However, here is where we should look at the indecisiveness in his statements. He also explained, after he talked about “integrity”, that he could not be confident in insisting that the villagers must have something in common to do. He confessed that he does not know if the village “integrity” is really that important or why he sticks to it so much. “I don’t know what is better for us. My opinions change every day.”

This ambiguity also subverts his proposal to make the slopes flatter for tea growing. Yet this is not because his proposal might not be the right solution. I asked him, “Do you think flattening the slope is a solution?” He answered, “No, I can’t deny tea growing will disappear and Maki will be in the forest [after pulling out all the tea and planting trees such as cedars]. I’m so sorry about that. But I also often think the disappearance is better as well because we will be liberated from what bothers us. But losing our integrity is terrifying. This is so ambiguous. I’m so indecisive.”

In the middle of this indecisiveness, the actions of Mr A never seem to get a firm justification, yet he still tries to do as many things as he can for his village. In addition to paving some steep areas, he said he wanted to do anything that might help the lives of the people in Maki. He actively bargains with the local government to improve roads for goods transport and for disaster prevention on the slopes. Mr A explains:

I don’t know what is best or what I can do. But I’d like to show that we have many things we can do before my time is over. Building pavements is an

example. I have to admit I have no vision. Probably, the future is no good. However, what we should do is explore, I believe. Doing something might lead to something good happening.

Mr A's testimonies represent the irony which other villagers are facing. He temporarily constructs something the village may want to pursue, but he soon deconstructs its basis. Mr A proudly explained the history of the settlement of old Maki by showing me a map drawn in the Edo period. Then, however, he continued, "There is nobody living in Maki who hasn't thought about why he or she was born here or why he or she came here. I always wonder why I have to be so confused."

Mrs B

The narratives of Mrs B and Mrs C are worth introducing because they take their positions at the relatively radical ends of the two sides among the villagers. On the one hand Mrs B, introduced above, is adamant that reducing the tea farms and the burden of *kyodo-sagyo* is a priority. On the other hand, Mrs C insists that the villagers should make an effort to keep to communal farming practices as much as possible. Even in these two extreme examples, we see the deep indecisiveness in the narratives of each individual.

Mrs B and her husband are actively trying to grow various crops and fruit, and confessed that they are the promoters of such activities. Mrs B said to me, "You might think it's curious to continue tea growing despite the low profits. I think so, too. I think it's better to live within what we can do. In the future, I hope to grow only vegetables for my family to eat." She added, "My husband and I often talk about this. And my mother-in-law agrees with us." She placed a notable emphasis on the agreement of her family.

First of all, Mrs B pointed out that there are health problems. She told me that she considered "preparation" for the decline in labour and health very important because she knew of many villagers who suffer from health problems. She insisted that reducing the amount of work and burden by reducing tea farms and downsizing *kyodo-sagyo* is an urgent matter, otherwise the villagers will destroy themselves. The second thing Mrs B mentioned was "rationality". She believes the villagers should not give any much deeper meaning to tea growing and *kyodo-sagyo* than "business". She regards it as meaningless to say that the villagers should maintain communal farming practices because they have traditionally used these for many years. For her, such rhetoric is not persuasive because it is nothing more than an irrational way of thinking. Compared to the other villagers, Mrs B seems as if she has a relatively

clear opinion. She even says that the villagers ought to rethink the two agreements mentioned above: the time has come for people to start to find “alternative ways”.

However, once again, statements that express ambivalent feelings emerge. First of all, she confessed that she cannot imagine what it will be like after the villagers give up *kyodo-sagyo*. Besides, she said, even she herself does not want *kyodo-sagyo* to end. I was surprised, and when I asked, “Didn’t you say you wanted to be liberated from the *kyodo-sagyo*?” she answered:

Yes. But the problem is not so simple. If the *kyodo-sagyo* ends, every family must do its work all by itself. Every individual will have to solve his problems by himself. The mutual assistance will disappear. Not all the families will be able to continue farming. I just hate to think of a time like this coming ... Do I have to cast myself off from others?

Here Mrs B tries, with difficulty, to imagine the future of Maki if *kyodo-sagyo* ends. She said the only thing she can imagine is the emergence in Maki of human relationships that are too individualistic. According to her, “too individualistic” means that nobody in Maki will help each other. She believes that the impact of the lost communal farming practices will not be confined to farming; the insecurity will spread to all aspects of village life. She described this as “the end of Maki”.

For Mrs B, it may seem unavoidable to take the first dangerous and insecure step towards giving up communal farming practices. But she does not have any specific vision of an “alternative way”. Instead, like Mr A, she told me that it is important to continue, through trial and error, to find an “alternative way”. She said, “If we don’t try, we won’t find anything ... Changing crops is one experiment to find out an alternative to avoid a worse future.” However, she did not forget to add, “I don’t expect so much, though.”

Mrs C

In contrast to Mrs B, Mrs C is relatively positive about sustaining tea growing and *kyodo-sagyo*. Mrs C was 55 years old in 2005. She was seriously injured in a traffic accident in 1994, and since that time had started to think in earnest about what she should be doing. She is still suffering persistent aches and pains, and became aware that everyone has something wrong with them to some extent. “That’s ageing. I realized that we could not maintain things as they were.” She thinks this problem has become more urgent in recent years. This is partially because her husband fell seriously ill in 2004 (he passed away in 2006).

Mrs C continually emphasizes that what she insists on is not “to give up tea growing” but to “reduce” the farms. Mrs C said she will be quite miserable if she pulls out all the tea trees that she inherited from her ancestors. She said, “I don’t want to be an object of contempt.” I asked, “Who will hold you in contempt?” and she replied, “Anybody, young or old. In addition, tea trees are so dear to me. I’m really proud of tea growing. It’s beyond logic.”

Mrs C told me that she, at least for the present, had decided to continue taking on cooperative cultivation for Mr A or anyone who might be in hospital, as long as her health was relatively good. Mrs C believes that reducing tea farms below the 0.5 ha line is pushing things too far. She explained that too much reduction will destroy everything before the villagers even have time to decide what Maki should be like in the future.

In spite of her active stance, Mrs C’s outlook is extremely insecure. She at first mentioned, in reference to *kyodo-sagyo*, “Honestly speaking, I can’t believe the *kyodo-sagyo* will still exist in 10 years’ time. It makes me very sad and insecure.” Mrs C told me she could not imagine what Maki would be like after *kyodo-sagyo* and tea growing had ended. “It’s almost unimaginable. If I may say so, it’s the end, the end of Maki. I mean nothing will remain. Even if a few people live here, it’s not Maki. Nothing. *Kyodo-sagyo* and tea growing make us feel connected to each other and tied to Maki.” For her, this “end” of Maki is what she “hates even to think about” and “never wants to live to see”.

Instead of talking about “the end” in detail, however, Mrs C hopes that younger people will continue to do something together for the common good. That “something in common” is not necessarily tea growing or *kyodo-sagyo*. She describes this as “passing on the baton”. She said, “Farming, the *Kako-group* or anything would be OK. I don’t insist on tea growing. If we can find out something better, I want to participate in that.”

These opinions show us that Mrs C is also in a state of indecisiveness. An ambivalent sequel soon follows most of her statements. For example, Mrs C added:

But I might change my mind soon, as I always do. We are ageing. Giving it all up will give me peace. We will be free from Maki ... I always wonder why I have to maintain the farms, why the *kyodo-sagyo* exists, and why I don’t get another part-time job instead of being a farmer ... I know the time we’ll have to give up everything will come soon. However, if I continue to endure, who can deny that something better might happen? I don’t know either. I think about it a lot, but I have no idea.

Mrs C tells us that if she continues to do her work as in the past, she can keep up her expectations, even though slight, that things will change for the better. If she maintains her farms instead of planting trees, other people might be able to start to grow something too. She explains this through her life experience of Maki. “I don’t want to deny all the possibilities. After 10 years have passed, you and we don’t know what will happen. When I came here about 30 years ago, I could never imagine the road would be paved, for example. We can’t foresee everything.” Because so many changes have occurred in her lifetime, she expects more changes. Yet it goes without saying that it is doubtful whether there will be enough people to work in common in 10 years’ time. Mrs C has three children. Her 30-year-old daughter left Maki when she married. The 28-year-old son once lived in Maki with his wife. Mr and Mrs C remodelled their house to make it larger for them, but they left Maki to see “the world outside”. Only their 23-year-old son remains in Maki, but he declares that he will not be a farmer.

Although her expectations are betrayed again and again, and she does not clearly know what she is expecting, Mrs C puts emphasis on the idea that continuing to do some work is the important thing. She said, “You must come here again in 10 years’ time. You never know what will happen.” This is the way she would like to spend the period of the “moratorium” until 2010.

Mrs D – “Patching a rag with rags”

The informants’ narratives above are all born of their efforts to navigate through their ambivalent feelings and contesting values under the insecurity of losing their village. Their explanations of their practices and thoughts do not convince the villagers themselves. The human insecurities they face – loss of livelihood, loss of village and family, and loss of life itself – are reflected in their narratives of insecurity and indecisiveness. However, one thing worth focusing on is that there are several tactics the villagers often use to cope with their indecisiveness and create a stable set of choices.

First, some villagers were trying to create a choice that was “irreversible” in order to pin down their own decisions. For example, one villager had dared to plant young tea trees on part of her farm. She explained that although the area of young tea trees was small, it reminded her of the “responsibility” of growing tea trees. This will keep her thinking of tea forever and prevent her from giving up tea growing. Another example is that one villager chose fruit instead of vegetables as a substitute crop. She told me that fruit was superior to vegetables in one way: once

the villagers plant fruit trees, they are more difficult to uproot than vegetables. This fact could keep her taking care of the fruit on a somewhat permanent basis, and prevent her from returning to tea growing. Mr A's pavement can also be regarded as one of these tactics. The size of his investment endorses the weight, or irreversibility, of his choice.

Second, the emphasis placed on "promises" is also important. The rule to sustain farming until 2010 is a good example. A villager told me that he agreed with this commitment, not because of his expectations of other villagers, but because of his expectations towards himself to keep farming. Another villager told me that he consciously tried to promise people in neighbouring villages, "I will show you that I will ship the same amount of tea next year."

Of course, these two tactics do not provide a complete solution to cope with either the indecisiveness or the insecurity in the village. Instead, it is worth noting that all the informants pointed out the importance of "doing something". Mr A and Mrs C thought that if they persevered as much as they could, their efforts might lead to something better. By the same token, although Mrs B wanted to see the "deterioration" of communal farming practices, she also placed emphasis on a gradual trial-and-error procedure for finding alternatives. The villagers explain it thus: they proceed by trial and error not because they have something worth pursuing now, but because they cannot be sure that they might not finally find something worth pursuing. Terms they use, such as "alternative way", do not have a concrete reference. They are waiting to be defined through the results of a specific activity.

The following testimony by Mrs D, a 57-year-old woman whom the villagers regard as the most "realistic", summarizes the villagers' insecurity:

Everything becomes a rag. The *kyodo-sagyo* is dissolving, tea growing is difficult, the *Kako-group* is uncertain, and we can't identify a good crop. We went over a lot of information, but I don't know what is best. I don't know what should be done. We can't avoid ageing, it seems hopeless, and we feel powerless. But we have to do something to have a life. We can't do otherwise but do something. In short, our life is like patching a rag with rags. Of course, I know a rag is a rag, but without a rag, I would feel even more insecure.

Yet if they continue to patch rags with rags, they may happen to make a quilt. At least, none of them can deny that possibility. The villagers can continue to patch as long as they believe in possibilities, even though they do not have a blueprint. They have not set out to make a quilt as the purpose to pursue. What we can see here, rather, is the villagers' attitude of trying to find the tiny possibilities emerging as they endeavour to construct the quilt. And though this practice is fragile, it is certainly continuing to make Maki's history.

In lieu of a conclusion

At first glance it seems much more difficult to recognize human security issues in a so-called "developed region" or "mature society". If the human security concept is merely to deal only with such obvious threats as "absolute poverty", it might ignore forms of insecurity in developed countries. However, when we read the statements of the *Human Development Report, 1994*, we cannot help thinking about the vast array of problems we have not solved. It stated: "For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event" (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 3).

This standpoint leads us to reconsider the problems which most people believe have been solved by modernization. Within this perspective, this chapter dealt with a small village in a "developed region". It is true that as post-war economic growth progressed, Japanese rural villages in general experienced income growth. However, as this chapter illustrates, when I went into Maki I found that the villagers' life is far from being "secure". Their insecurity is what most of the previous research has overlooked. The villagers' life amounts to what Polanyi observed of *Hamlet*: they live "insofar as [they] refuse to die".

Therefore, this chapter emphasized the fact that, in order to capture the insecurity of Maki and other villages, we have to give up one simple but dominating presupposition: that people can choose their actions based on what is worth pursuing. This is a danger for policy scientists who try to observe people's creative practices. We often presuppose that the people concerned are able to judge among various alternatives and choose those which will help them achieve what they want.

Some people might argue that this sort of difficulty is still less important in the study of human security than the study of more "tragic" cases of severe material deprivation, hunger, or genocide. But this argument has one serious flaw. If we measure the importance of research objectives by their degree of "tragedy", the research itself would be trapped in a spiral. And in subsequently seeking more "tragic" cases, this would leave nothing except for the most obvious tragedies, or creating another spiral in which the debate on what "tragic" means would become an end in itself. As a result, we would not be able to deal with the diversity of problems from which people suffer in diverse contexts and regions of the world.

In the near future the villagers of Maki will have to confront a complete withdrawal from farming and perhaps the disappearance of the village altogether, like many villages in the recent past. The human security issue here is first of all concerned with the efforts of the villagers simply to continue their lives.

Notes

1. Amartya Sen stated that well-being is the expansion of the freedom to pursue a “life he or she has reason to value” (Sen, 1999: 87). Human security studies are based on this normative standard.
2. In regards to my descriptions of Maki, first, all names of informants and geographic places have been changed. Second, I used several official and historical documents on Maki, but I do not mention them here in order to maintain the anonymity of the village.
3. I would like briefly to introduce the method of tea producing, which is divided into two processes. The first is to make *ara-cha* (rough tea) by steaming, kneading, and drying tea-leaves. The second is to refine and arrange the shapes of the *ara-cha* leaves to make the final product. Every workshop in the villages was involved in the first process. Since the villagers had to begin this process and do the harvesting at the same time, they called this busy time the “war”. The new integrated processing plant now has the infrastructure for both processes.
4. The *Kako-group* is a side-job group. It has its own worksite in Maki, and women process vegetables and fruit there to sell at the local tourist facility or at tourism-promotion events held in cities such as Yokohama. The *Kako-group* was organized in 1996 after a suggestion by the local government. Since then, the local government has expected the group to be active in promoting tourism in Kitagawa. The local agricultural policy division also describes this activity as “the women’s effort to solve local problems” on its website. While the sustainability of the *Kako-group* is in question due to a slump in business and the ageing of its members, the group is thought of as the final remaining space in which female villagers can enclose the “communal”. This is because the villagers think it will be the last communal practice to remain when the other practices have all vanished.

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3

Choice of their own, choice from their need: People on the move in rural northeast Thailand

Atsushi Watabe and Chaicharn Wongsamun

Migration and the human security perspective

The human security approach

In the 1990s the human security approach caught the world's attention with the famous phrase from the 1994 *Human Development Report*, “freedom from fear and freedom from want” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Since then, numerous international organizations, government agencies, and research bodies all over the world have gradually enriched the meaning and scope of this approach. Nevertheless, the human security approach cannot be characterized as a new approach simply in terms of the overall issues it considers. As a matter of fact, the “fears” and “wants” listed in the *Human Development Reports (HDRs)* and other human security documents are not really different from the issues dealt with in conventional policy studies. Rather, this approach is remarkable for the perspective it takes in defining and tackling the same issues. Let us start with a few points of conventional policy studies from which the HS approach seeks to differentiate itself.

Beyond nation-state as the main target of “security”

One clear difference lies in the geographical scope of “security”. The stability of a nation-state or its “developed” socio-economic condition does not always ensure a secure life for its people. In fact, ordinary people's daily lives are often connected to conditions and phenomena across

borders, and thus quite a few security factors in their daily lives go beyond the reach of the nation-state. For this reason, not only government agencies dealing with national socio-economic development, but also international organizations, private enterprise, NGOs, and, above all, the communities and people living with, or at high risk of, insecurity themselves should be considered as those who are aware of and are attempting to resolve human security issues.

Beyond development as the sole path to "security"

Conventional ideas of national stability go along with the idea that favourable socio-economic development is most likely to be the primary means of providing security to the people, who may in turn suffer from "temporary" hardships caused by the struggle to develop. In other words, socio-economic transitions will eventually be of benefit to everyone in a wider sense. As examples, environmental degradation or a widening gap in conventional living standards are to be tolerated under the assumption that they are temporary, or that everyone's condition will more or less improve in the end. Nevertheless, who can persuade people or communities to tolerate "temporary hardship" when they themselves seem likely to sink under the burden of their insecurity before this eventual "improvement" occurs?

Change of players: Security through empowering people

If we are seriously to consider such limitations to the conventional idea of security, we can no longer delegate the responsibility for defining and tackling security issues only to governments. From the time the United Nations launched the Commission on Human Security in 2000 until its final report in 2003, *Human Security Now*, it articulated additional points to be taken into account, including "empowering all people" and "linking many initiatives" (Commission on Human Security, 2003). From this perspective, national governments are not considered as the main actors, but as one of the key players for "security issues" either in setting out the problems or in facilitating and implementing the solutions.

Revisiting migration: Does the human security perspective make any difference?

Given the above considerations, do such shifts of perspective make any difference to the way we consider the issues of migration? This possibility currently seems remote, as a result of certain factors we will look at below. As long as we try to specify "the security threats of migration", the human security perspective gives us neither fresh approaches nor pioneering solutions. This is partly because conventional migration studies

prior to the human security approach have already dealt with quite a wide range of issues. Let us first briefly examine some possible security threats and positive effects as seen in migration within Southeast Asia.

Security concerns regarding migration

First, migration studies have investigated the effects that the mass movement of people imposes on both receiving and sending areas. It is widely recognized that receiving areas can make use of the cheap labour supplied from less-developed areas. Urban construction and industrialization during periods of high, rapid growth, and the large informal service sector and small manufacturing that exist during the stable growth periods of the highly developed cities and countries, absorb many workers from surrounding areas (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Todaro and Smith, 2006; Kearney, 1986; Sassen-Koob, 1984). On the other hand, mass immigration is seen as a cause of decreases in domestic wages, employment destabilization, and waves of crime and the erosion of "traditional culture" (Widgren, 1990).

At the same time, the sending countries and areas depend on the contributions to their national or regional income provided by emigrating workers in the form of remittances, and see this as income to be used for speeding up their development processes. It is widely believed that returning migrants also contribute to modernizing their sending communities by bringing back advanced knowledge, skills, and ideas (Redfield, 1941), but recent studies deny this simple assumption (Kearney, 1986; Levitt, 1998). Instead, mass out-migration can be shown to be a risk factor to the regional labour supply (Widgren, 1990).

Second, insecurity issues for families and individuals that are caused by the migration of a family member have also been the subject of study. Migrant workers experience serious dangers. During the process of moving they often encounter fraud on the part of the brokers, or human trafficking (Sobieszcyk, 2000). Once they arrive at the destination, they have to cope with unstable or constantly shifting conditions in working and living. They may sometimes have to give up work due to sudden deportation orders. Even after returning to their home countries, huge debts caused by the often outrageous commission fees of brokers remain a long-term burden (ibid.; Supang, 2001). The families of migrant workers face difficulties in farming, rearing children, and participation in local community activities after the departure of the migrant. In most cases it is the healthy younger family members who go out in search of jobs, leaving behind, among others, the children, the sick, and the elderly. Out-migration from rural villages is therefore sometimes followed by a change in the local labour supply, from a mutual help system to wage labour, and this may also increase expenses and debts at home (Fuller, 1977; Richer et al., 1997).

These are only some examples of the various issues which conventional migration studies have covered. Given this background, we are sceptical of the possibility of identifying new approaches only by introducing the human security perspective into conventional migration studies.

Policies regarding migration

So will a human security perspective be able to provide new solutions to “migration issues”? Similar to our dilemma involving the “insecurity issues” listed above, we probably will not be able to think of any genuinely new policy ideas as long as we expect policies to be implemented by the same old actors – government organizations. In fact, most governments have already implemented a number of measures in their development planning in order to make full use of what have been identified as “securing” or “developing” effects, and to reduce the perceived factors in insecurity within their countries.

First, there are examples of sending and receiving countries that have tried to protect both the migrant workers and the receiving job market. An agreement is usually signed between counterpart countries regarding the conditions of migrant work, such as duration of work permits, job titles, wages, and so on. Thailand signed such agreements with several Middle Eastern countries in the 1970s and then with Taiwan and Singapore in the 1980s about the conditions for Thai labourers while in these countries (Gunatilleke, 1991; Sobieszcyk, 2000).

Second, many of the sending governments usually attempt to regulate and supervise the local employment service agencies that send workers abroad. The Thai government implemented such regulations in 1982, stipulating that employment agencies must provide adequate information to the applicants and not exploit them (*ibid.*). In addition, some governments require applicants to take skills development or language courses, under the assumption that less skill or language ability may lead to more unstable or unsatisfactory labour conditions after migrating. At the same time, governments of sending countries often regulate the process of remittance in terms of amounts and remittance facilities to be used, so that workers can invest more into local industries or agriculture back home and less in daily expenses and personal luxuries.

Third, as an essential solution to the “insecurity of migration”, governments sometimes try to make rural labour migration less necessary by developing rural job markets, through such initiatives as instituting public works and encouraging the manufacturing sector to establish plants in local areas. Thailand launched the Rural Job Creation Programme in 1979, and it continued until the late 1980s. Yet although the RJCP created 4 million jobs at its peak in 1981, the effect on reducing out-migration was limited.¹ Thus a number of Southeast Asian governments (the Thai government in particular is an example here) have already taken various

measures in order to ensure positive effects and minimize negative factors in migration from the national level to the individual level. Given this, we may conclude that migration policies were being implemented long before the arrival of the human security perspective.

The only important exceptions to these approaches have been provided by recent migration studies. The third feature of the human security perspective mentioned above leads us to shed light on another sort of “policy” regarding human migration, which may provide “security” at the most basic level. This is the everyday practices of migrants to reduce the cost, hedge the risk, maximize the benefit, and maintain social and cultural bonds with the origin community and their own families. For the past 20 years academics have focused on the “networks” or “transnational social spaces” by which migrants, their families, and the local community maintain their knowledge, funds, and psychological or cultural ties while trying to maximize their income through out-migration (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc Szanton, 1992; Van Hear, 2002; Al-Ali, 2002). Yet the background to these theories was that researchers who were dissatisfied with conventional studies that mostly dealt with economic causes and effects came up with the idea of “transnational social spaces” or “networks”. Their perspective at the time resembled the human security perspective, yet such analyses became popular before the HS perspective arose, and are not the outcome of it.

Here we do not mean that the HS perspective is simply an unnecessary addendum to migration studies and policies. Any time we deal with “security issues” or “security policies”, we are still dealing with existing topics and approaches. Introducing the HS perspective into a given issue may provide us with only a limited degree of innovation, for the issues have already been defined. However, we still have another possibility: to connect the issue and the approach to it from the reverse angle. That is, we can re-examine “security” through observing the livelihoods of the people concerned: those who move to find jobs and those who are closely impacted by the effects of these moves.

Let us recall the three features of the HS perspective and rephrase them in words closer to ordinary people’s daily lives. First, the HS perspective assumes a position of doubt as to whether the security of the national border always assures the security of people’s lives within it. This is due to the fact that the events and situations of people’s lives are not always limited to the definitions, circumstances, and measurements of the national economy and society. Second, the security of people is not always realized through the development of the national or local economy. In other words, people sometimes have various sorts of solutions of their own, other than simply waiting for the effects of economic development to bring positive changes to the area. Third, the HS perspective

sheds light on the capacity of people to solve their problems and tries to evaluate and support the people, local or otherwise, who do so. In fact, the people whom we introduce in this chapter give us quite ample hints as to what we are to consider “human security”. Migration, or “*people on the move*”,² can be a touchstone for us in discussing how to approach security issues in ordinary people’s lives.

In order to make use of migration in this way, the following sections will examine two aspects of migration by referring first to a quantitative survey conducted in northeast Thailand by a Khon Kaen University team led by Professor Wongsamun (Wongsamun et al., 2007), and then to life-history interviews from the same area as written up by Atsushi Watabe (2004, 2006, 2008).

Migration and local development

Comparison of sending areas on the basis of agricultural development

From July to September 2005, Khon Kaen University (KKU) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) based in the Philippines conducted a large-scale survey in Thailand entitled “The Impact of Migration and/or Off-farm Employment on Roles of Women and Appropriate Technologies in Asian and Australian Mixed Farming Systems”. They studied 415 households in 20 villages in 2 provinces in northeast Thailand, Khon Kaen and Udonthani.

In the villages, the team researched basic categories such as economic conditions, the cost of moving/migration, means of communication, and the effects of remittances. This research made comparisons among sending communities as to their differences in agricultural conditions on two bases.

- Agricultural conditions differentiated by irrigation (this is a very dry area where in some cases agricultural livelihoods are severely limited): 9 villages from irrigated areas and 11 from rain-fed areas.
- Duration of migration: short-term migrants (those who engaged in migration for three to six months within one year) and long-term migrants (those who go away to work continuously for over six months within one year).³

The first comparison of the irrigated and rain-fed areas may sound somewhat strange to the reader. The team compared two types of paddy areas on the assumption that the difference in rice production may affect the tendency, the cost, and the benefits of migration. It is believed that production and therefore income in rain-fed areas, which are still the

majority of areas in northeast Thailand, fall significantly below those in irrigated areas. Besides, the harvest in rain-fed areas varies year by year because of the irregularity of precipitation. Due to such differences, irrigation is considered an effective measure to raise agricultural production in the northeast where additional farmland is no longer available. Therefore irrigation, as well as land allocation and the introduction of commercial crops, has always been the predominant measure whenever there is a new plan for agricultural development in the northeast.⁴ In short, the government's development plans have tried to enhance the security of rural northeast society through stabilizing and raising agricultural profits.

Yet migration makes it quite difficult for the policy-makers to control the conditions necessary for the kind of planned economic development we see in this attempt to raise agricultural production. Migration has provided individuals and households with the opportunity to improve and secure their livelihoods ahead of the pace of development of the local economy. If the returnees then invest a large amount of the money they saved at the work destination in local agriculture, they can accelerate the development of the region as a whole. On the other hand, as noted earlier, migration poses various costs and risks for the people and community as a whole. In this manner migration can be recognized both as an opportunity for local people and at the same time as a thorn in the side of policy-makers who have sought conventional, economic-growth-oriented paths for rural development.

It was for these reasons that the KKU-IRRI joint team tried to clarify the effect that rice production may have on the cost and outcomes of migration. We can assume that economic conditions in the irrigated areas prior to an individual's migration may be significantly better than in rain-fed areas, and may show the following effects.

- In terms of the benefits, due to the stability of agricultural production the villagers of irrigated areas have less need for supplemental income and thus less need for moving.
- However, irrigation heightens the efficiency of investment into farmland and equipment, and thus provides an incentive for moving to gain savings.
- We may also assume that villagers in the irrigated areas have less difficulty managing the monetary or the opportunity costs (for example, hiring farm labour) of moving, due to the reliability of farm production.

Verifying these assumptions may help us consider how the rural people improve and secure their livelihoods on their own, and whether and how this may contribute to local development.

In addition, the KKU-IRRI team focused on the duration of the move to work destinations. Official surveys of migration by the National Statistical Office and the Thailand Development Research Institute define

long-term migrants as those who continuously live and work for over six months in a place remote from their original community, for the reason that in paddy areas usually the rice farming season is from May to November; thus those who stay away longer than the six months from December to the following May are those who will not be helping with the farm work. On the other hand, the popular seasonal migration to the sugar plantations in central Thailand, which takes place from the middle of December to the following April, places only a small burden on rice growing in the villages.

We may assume the following effects that the duration of migration has on local life.

- Short-term migration (under six months) is available only domestically, with poor working conditions and lower wages.
- As a result short-term migrants remit less, and spend their wages on their daily expenses or repaying their debts rather than on farm investment.
- On the other hand, long-term migrants may have higher wages and depend less on agricultural income in the villages, and thus have less incentive for farm investment when they return home.

A short review of the KKU-IRRI survey

Basic characteristics

Before trying to verify these initial assumptions, let us look at some basic characteristics of the research sites. Khon Kaen and Udonthani are both large provinces in northeast Thailand which are known as predominantly rice-producing areas and as providers of domestic and overseas migrants.

The team surveyed 415 households in 20 villages: 175 households from 9 rain-fed villages and 240 households from 11 irrigated villages. The team were able to collect data from about 21 per cent of the households in the villages. Let us begin with an overview on the numbers of families and the gender and age structure of the migrants.

First, among the sample households about 30 per cent of the members have migrated at some time in the past. Two-thirds of the migrants have stayed more than six months at the destination (table 3.1).

Second, table 3.2 tells us that the tendency to migrate depends heavily on the potential mover's age, particularly for a long-term move. People aged 25 to 34 tend to move the most frequently.

Third, Bangkok is the most important destination for both short-term and long-term migrants (table 3.3). Yet long-term migrants sometimes also go abroad. At their destinations most migrants work as unskilled labourers or sales persons (table 3.4).

Table 3.1 Number and classification of household members

Characteristics	Rain-fed area	Irrigated area
Number of sample households	175	240
Total number of household members	1,025	1,403
Average household size	5.85	5.84
Proportion (%) of household members		
– Non-migrants	72	71
– Migrants	28	29
Total %	100	100
Proportion (%) of total migrants		
– Short-term migrants	34	35
– Long-term migrants	66	65
Total %	100	100

Table 3.2 Classification of migrants by gender and age

Age	Rain-fed area		Irrigated area	
	Short term (n = 99)	Long term (n = 189)	Short term (n = 145)	Long term (n = 265)
<i>Male migrants</i>				
15–24	26	21	31	23
25–34	41	53	47	45
35–44	21	24	18	25
45–54	12	2	4	6
Over 54	–	–	–	1
Total %	100	100	100	100
<i>Female migrants</i>				
15–24	38	23	32	14
25–34	42	66	46	56
35–44	18	10	15	26
45–54	2	–	7	4
Over 54	–	1	–	–
Total %	100	100	100	100

Note that selected destinations and occupations show very little difference among rain-fed and irrigated areas, apart from the fact that short-term migrants from rain-fed areas tend to go to Bangkok while those from irrigated areas go to closer cities and provinces.

Usages

Then, what kind of a “solution” does migration provide for the rural people? What kind of costs do they bear? Among both males and females most informants answered that their reason for migration was “a higher income” (table 3.5).

Table 3.3 Classification of migrants by place of work

Place of work	Rain-fed area		Irrigated area	
	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
Town in same province	4	3	8	2
Province in same region	4	3	6	5
Province in different region	20	23	23	17
Bangkok	70	59	57	57
ASEAN countries	–	2	1	4
Middle Eastern countries	1	2	1	4
Far Eastern countries	1	8	3	12
Other	–	1	–	1
Total %	100	100	100	100

Table 3.4 Classification of migrants by gender and occupation

Occupation	Rain-fed area		Irrigated area	
	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
<i>Male migrants</i>				
Agricultural labourer	9	5	12	8
Sales person in store	23	27	25	27
Government official	2	1	–	2
Trading/business	2	4	2	4
Unskilled job	59	60	57	56
Other	5	3	4	3
Total %	100	100	100	100
<i>Female migrants</i>				
Agricultural labourer	16	1	8	7
Sales person in store	30	37	30	29
Government official	–	1	2	1
Trading/business	4	4	5	7
Unskilled job	46	54	50	54
Other	4	3	5	2
Total %	100	100	100	100

In more detail, long-term movement from rain-fed areas tended to occur most frequently for this reason. At the same time, repaying debts, lack of job opportunities locally, and following a migrant spouse account for 4–7 per cent among short-term migrants from rain-fed areas and among both short- and long-term migrants from irrigated areas. Yet we find very little difference in the initial reason for moving between the rain-fed areas and the irrigated areas.

Now let us examine the initial costs of migration. About two-thirds of migrants rely on parents as the source of the funds needed to move, followed by the migrants themselves (relying on their own funds). Note that

Table 3.5 Classification of migrants by main reason for migration

Reason for migration	Rain-fed area		Irrigated area	
	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
<i>Male migrants</i>				
Increase income	81	98	94	86
Earn income for paying debt	7	—	1	4
Lack of jobs in local area	5	1	5	5
Lack of interest in current job	—	1	—	1
Follow spouse	2	—	—	4
Other	5	—	—	—
Total %	100	100	100	100
<i>Female migrants</i>				
Increase income	82	94	85	89
Earn income for paying debt	2	—	3	2
Lack of jobs in local area	7	4	5	2
Lack of interest in current job	—	—	—	—
Follow spouse	9	1	7	7
Other	—	1	—	—
Total %	100	100	100	100

Table 3.6 Classification of migrants by source of financing for migration

Source of finances	Rain-fed area		Irrigated area	
	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
Self-support	25	21	16	22
Spouse	3	3	4	6
Parents	62	65	68	58
Spouse's parents	2	2	3	3
Government organizations	—	—	1	—
Work placement agencies	6	6	3	7
Other	2	3	5	4
Total %	100	100	100	100

irrigated and rain-fed areas show no significant difference as to these two sources of funding (table 3.6).

Table 3.7 shows us the cost of migration. We can tell at a glance that the needed amount of funds significantly differs between short-term and long-term migrants. We could of course attribute this to the difference of destination. Yet this table also draws our attention to the fact that short-term migrants from irrigated areas pay 2.5 times more than those from rain-fed areas, even though the significant destinations are little different, while the funding for long-term migrants is much the same in both areas. Thus far we have not been able to formulate the reasons for this.

Table 3.7 Classification of migrants by amount of expenses for migration

Amount of expenses		Rain-fed area		Irrigated area	
Thai baht	US\$	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
200–500	5.71–14.29	8	16	8	9
501–1,000	14.30–28.58	46	21	23	25
1,001–10,000	28.59–285.72	44	50	62	47
10,000–600,000	285.73– 17,142.86	1	13	6	19
Total %		100	100	100	100
Average (Thai baht)		2,593.68	27,270.86	6,624.65	27,316.02
Average (US\$)		74.11	779.17	189.28	780.46

Note: Exchange rate: US\$1.00 = 35.00 Thai baht

Table 3.8 Average income and remittances of migrants (US\$)

Income and remittances	Rain-fed area (n = 288)		Irrigated area (n = 410)	
	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
<i>Male migrants</i>				
Monthly income	207.44	274.77	256.70	313.34
Annual income	2,069.60	3,252.95	2,672.71	3,688.39
Monthly remittances	50.48	71.79	45.20	95.84
Annual remittances	503.65	849.94	470.59	1,128.18
% of remittances over income	24	26	18	31
<i>Female migrants</i>				
Monthly income	216.03	206.87	206.95	217.50
Annual income	2,175.44	2,455.89	2,177.14	2,570.81
Monthly remittances	36.69	42.94	46.80	51.64
Annual remittances	359.39	509.71	492.38	610.39
% of remittances over income	16	21	23	24

Next, let us examine the benefits of migration.

Table 3.8 shows the results of income breakdowns. Two points here are noteworthy. As may be expected, long-term migrants earn and send far more than short-term migrants. Furthermore, comparison between those from irrigated areas and those from rain-fed areas with the same gender and same destination gives us an interesting finding. Male short-term migrants from irrigated areas earn 1.3 times more than those from rain-fed areas. Female short-term migrants from irrigated areas earn the same as those from rain-fed areas, yet they remit 1.4 times more to their families. Long-term migrants, both male and female, show trends similar to those of female short-term migrants. Thus we find that those from

Table 3.9 Sources of household income

Source of income (%)	Rain-fed area	Irrigated area
Cash income from rice	14.8	18.1
Non-cash income from rice	26.8	27.2
Cash income from other crops	10.4	5.1
Non-cash income from other crops	—	0.2
Remittances from migration	25.0	24.7
Off-farm sources	8.2	6.3
Non-farm sources	6.9	10.2
Capital gains from land/non-land assets	0.2	0.5
Sales from livestock	6.6	6.3
Capital gains from household goods	0.2	0.2
Other	0.9	1.1
Total %	100	100
Annual household income (Thai baht)	30,792.55	37,816.57
Per capita income (US\$)	879.79	1,080.47

Note: Exchange rate: US\$1.00 = 35.00 Thai baht

irrigated areas apparently send more than those from rain-fed areas even though their earnings are similar, apart from male short-term migrants who earn more and remit more. If, as we have seen, irrigated areas make investment from remittances on a larger scale, then it is logical for those from irrigated areas to devote a larger proportion of their income to remittances.

In short, the survey so far shows that the migrants from the rain-fed and irrigated areas differ very little in terms of the costs and monetary benefits of migration, whereas the duration of the move shows a clear difference. The long-term migrants bore heavier costs and obtained greater benefits than the short-term migrants.

The effects on the household economy and agriculture

So far we have seen that migrants from irrigated areas earn approximately equal amounts of money to those from rain-fed areas. Are there differences in terms of the impact on the family or the community coming from these earnings from labour migration? And do the villagers in the irrigated areas earn more from agricultural production than those in the rain-fed areas? Do the latter villagers depend more on remittances?

First, the income from migration in the surveyed villages accounts for about one-quarter of the household income in both areas (table 3.9). As we have already seen from table 3.8, those from the rain-fed areas remit slightly less than those from the irrigated areas. Yet due to the lesser total household income, the significance of these remittances shows very little difference in terms of percentage of total household income.

Table 3.10 Disbursement of remittances from migrants (%)

Disbursement of remittances	Rain-fed area (n = 288)		Irrigated area (n = 410)	
	Short term	Long term	Short term	Long term
<i>Male migrants</i>				
Food	38	24	33	20
Education	10	13	7	7
Medical	2	3	4	3
Social	4	2	4	3
House build/repair	5	6	10	6
Farm use	15	13	14	15
Clothing	1	2	3	2
Savings	6	4	5	10
Debt repayment	7	25	10	27
Household durables	8	7	8	6
Other	3	3	2	2
Total %	100	100	100	100
<i>Female migrants</i>				
Food	27	21	37	23
Education	13	14	12	8
Medical	3	3	7	2
Social	2	2	3	3
House build/repair	24	4	3	15
Farm use	8	14	14	13
Clothing	4	2	2	2
Savings	3	2	4	9
Debt repayment	5	32	8	16
Household durables	9	4	8	8
Other	2	2	2	2
Total %	100	100	100	100

Next, what does this addition of the “one-quarter” of income enable the rural households to do? Table 3.10 shows the uses to which remittances were put, and their proportions.

While the range of items makes it difficult to spot a trend, it can be seen that food expenses account for the greatest part, followed by education, debt repayment, and farm use. Here it is noteworthy that in both areas short-term migrants spend far more on food and less on debt repayment. It is possible to understand this in two ways. One is that short-term migrants earn far less, spend most of their earnings for their daily use, and cannot pay back their debts. The other is that long-term migrants had to borrow a larger amount before moving, and thus are under a heavier obligation to repay. Further, it may not be necessary to choose one explanation over the other, as they are not mutually exclusive.

Finally, table 3.11 summarizes the informants’ attitudes towards the effects of migration on farm management. The point to note is that almost

Table 3.11 Perception of impact of out-migration of respondents in each ecosystem

Perception of impact	NA	Increase	No change	Decrease
<i>Rain-fed area</i>				
Area planted to rice	1	1	96	2
Production on rice yield	–	1	93	5
Number of rice varieties	1	–	97	2
Area for other crops	23	1	76	1
Number of other crops	25	1	73	1
Number of livestock	36	1	62	1
Number of poultry raised	24	3	72	1
<i>Irrigated area</i>				
Area planted to rice	–	1	95	4
Production on rice yield	–	–	92	8
Number of rice varieties	1	3	93	3
Area for other crops	29	–	67	4
Number of other crops	31	2	65	2
Number of livestock	34	3	60	3
Number of poultry raised	31	3	64	2

Note: NA = not applicable or no response.

all of them felt migration had no obvious effect on farming methods. Considering this result, and given the fact that a relatively low proportion of the remittances was used for farm investment, we may conclude that income earned outside the community does not actually help to “develop” a farm-based livelihood. As a matter of fact, official surveys of migration indicate similar results. They often conclude that so much of the remittances are spent on debt repayment or “luxuries” such as housing, cars, and electric appliances that the effect on the development of local agriculture or industry falls short of expectations (Chirapun, 1991; Guest, 1995).

However, we should avoid drawing such conclusions based only on an examination of the expenditures which seem unlikely to be helpful for farming. The value of commodities cannot be determined only by their supposed utility. For instance, if a former migrant builds the kind of big cement house known as *Baan Taiwan* (“Taiwan house”, in reference to the person having worked in Taiwan), it may raise the family’s prestige in the community in addition to providing the usual utility of a dwelling. As a more tangible example, when villagers refer to a “car” in the rural northeast, they nearly always mean not the luxury of owning a personal automobile but rather a pick-up truck that will enable them to engage in side jobs such as a transport business or peddling – obviously not simply a luxury in their circumstances.

These results proved some of our initial assumptions wrong. First, the migrants from rain-fed and irrigated areas pay similar costs and obtain

similar benefits in regards to migration. Second, despite the large portion of the household economy accounted for by remittances, they make only a limited contribution to improving agricultural production. Given similar results, government planners and conventional researchers tend to conclude that the limited opportunities for investing put off any incentive the farmers may have had to develop their agriculture any further (ibid.).

This is quite valid, in that it offers a clear idea of the measures they should take. Yet such results also offer us another angle from which to think of the livelihood of rural people. Do the farmers' lives consist only of farming? Is the one-quarter of the household income that comes from remittances only a "supplement" to the "main" income from crops? Are they not looking for a solution different from the government's idea of improving the local economy through agricultural development?

What do the villagers bring in from the outer world?

So far we have enquired into the effects of migration mostly in terms of income generation and agricultural production, and found that the former effect was substantial while the latter was only limited. Nevertheless, we do not conclude here that migration plays only a limited role in rural development.

Generally speaking, conventional studies of migration and of rural society have paid insufficient attention to an obvious fact: a person maintains his or her life by combining a number of behaviours, actions, or livelihoods, in line with the number of places one may have lived in and the changing times or periods of one's life. However, if we are to deal with people's own understanding of the insecurities they face and their inventive ways of "securing" their lives, we have to look more closely at the effects of migration. In doing so, we can link migration to the migrants' own choices involved in staying for various durations, their places of origin, and the periods they pass through without moving away from home. Such observations tell us that people may access further possibilities for "securing" or "developing" their lives when they access economic activities outside.

A few examples: Migration as "solution"

This section presents further considerations derived from some of the life-history interviews Watabe conducted in the nearby areas between 2003 and 2005. He interviewed 125 households about their household circumstances and economy in three villages close to one of the Khon Kaen University group's study sites. Note that he did not conduct his

study within the same framework of short-term/long-term migration or irrigated/rain-fed paddy. Instead of classifying informants by duration of migration, he tried to ascertain the way villagers recalled and told their experiences, which included migration. In fact, some of his informants had experienced several moves to various destinations and for various durations, making it quite difficult to tell “long-term” from “short-term” migrants. In this section we classify migrants into three categories: seasonal migrants (starting from the 1960s), urban migrants (starting from the 1970s), and overseas migrants (starting from the 1980s). The duration of the first category is three to five months, while the second and the last are usually for a few years or longer.

To gain a clearer understanding of the diversity of the “effects” or “results” that the rural people hoped for and sometimes obtained through migration, let us introduce some of the informants with whom Watabe spoke.

Collaborative survival in a farm village

The first type of migrants simply answered that they had had no choice except to search for jobs outside the village, due either to the unpredictable or unreliable nature of farm production or to accidental contingencies.

For instance, almost all the families in one village (hereinafter referred to as P village) have at least one member who worked in a sugar-cane plantation in central Thailand, as P village was originally a relocation site and the land distributed to the new villagers in 1985 was not suited to paddy. Specifically, the Royal Forestry Department removed 500 families from another province to the current site of the village, claiming they had encroached on the national conservation forest there, and entitled them to cultivate 7.5 rai (about 1.25 ha) in the area around P village. Yet when they arrived at their new land they found only a deep forest. One woman told Watabe of her experience, shown in the following three excerpts.

They left us nothing, no road, no house, no electricity, no paddy! We had a very hard time making the forest arable. I helped my parents in slashing and then burning the forest.

We did everything by hand, as we had no machinery, no buffalo or cow.

Even houses, we constructed on our own. Several families who were very close to us helped each other. No, not this [cement] house [we live in now], we lived in a shack made of coconut trees and leaves.

(Interview with A, 16 August 2003.)

That they had to construct everything from the beginning was not their only affliction. Snakes, wild elephants, and even tigers threatened them at night. They asked a nearby hamlet to accept them for the first three years until they were able to clear part of the forest and assure themselves of safety at least within their own houses. Moreover, even after this initial struggle the land provided them with insufficient yields for survival: the small amount of land (7.5 rai) they were given accounted for only half of the nominal amount that the RFD was officially supposed to have allocated, and also lacked water due to its relatively high elevation. Thus before they made a pond, most of the villagers could not produce rice and lived on selling the corn they grew instead. Such poor conditions obliged them to go to work in other provinces every year in search of “supplemental” income, yet despite the fact that they call it “supplemental”, it has been the main income even up until the present. They utilized the kinship ties they had maintained since they lived in the original forest, partly in their continuous efforts at cultivating the farmland and partly to develop a route or network by which the group members can gain employment on the same sugar plantation every year. In December one of the group’s families receives a phone call from the owner of the sugar plantation and announces to the other families the date when the truck will come and take them to the farm, how many workers the owner wants that year, and how much they may earn. Then a large truck visits the village and takes them on a 20-hour trip to the farm. About 20 families in the group send from 1 to 3 of their adults (both men and women), and the migrants earn 10,000–12,000 baht per person before they come back to the village in April. However, although this is quite a large “supplement” to the family income, at times some families must refrain from sending a family member depending on their circumstances, such as their health, the need for young labour on their own farm, and so on. Yet they keep on sharing the job information with each other every year so that they may join the migration again when their family conditions change for the better. In this sense the channel also works for the families temporarily without migrants, at least in terms of reducing their future insecurity should the need arise.

Satisfying the family’s necessity

The second type of migrants resemble the first in that they also had little choice other than migration, but they differ as to the manner of moving and obtaining benefits. A man of another village (N village) lived in relatively better-off conditions when compared to the villagers of P village, yet he had to send both his sons to a factory near Bangkok because of the impact of the development of the village. In 1997 the village committee paved the roads in the hamlet, unexpectedly leaving his residence a

few centimetres below the level of the pavement. He had to rebuild the front door and floor to prevent flooding caused by the rain-squalls that occur nearly every day in the rainy season, and was 150,000 baht in debt. At that time he could manage to earn 30,000 baht a year from selling his crops, but this was insufficient for the repayment of the debt. His sons told him that they would work in the city and pay it back. He said that he had no idea if he could repay it without their remittances.

To an outsider's view his children may seem quite unlucky if we believe that they left home only because of the family's debts, and work only for the sake of their father. However, this understanding is too simple, as is the assumption on which it is based – that one makes a choice for clear reasons, and keeps on acting in line with it. In fact, the elder son has not sent money home for a long time. Yet the father accepted this.

“How much do you receive from your sons per year?”

“I don't receive now from the elder son. He has a life of his own, a family of his own. That is why I don't expect him to send me money any longer.”

(Interview with B, 21 August 2000.)

Migrants' conditions, needs, and the costs and the benefits of moving vary during the course of moving or even after, as their lives go on. According to B's understanding, his son had begun following the next path in his life, taking on responsibility for his own family in exchange for giving up helping his father.

The reason we distinguish this type of migration from the first type, that of collaborative migration, is that in this case people manage the routes by which they move in a less collaborative way than those preceding the seasonal migration. They evaluate the benefits and costs of migration on their own, and any benefits obtained from the exterior labour market may accrue only in terms of their own survival.

Changing their lives individually

Contrary to the other two types, recent migrants, in particular those who go abroad, are not in immediate need of money. As a matter of fact the further they try to go the more they have to pay the job placement agency, which sometimes forces them to mortgage their land. Thus the majority of overseas migrants are better off among the villagers, but they still emphasize a single opinion: “there's nothing here, no chance here”.

Let us introduce our third informant. Mr S, born in 1946, was one of the first seven overseas migrants from the third village Watabe re-

searched (hereinafter village D). In the beginning, Mr S worked at several construction sites in Saudi Arabia for seven years, returning to his village in 1986. Thereafter, he remained in his village for three years before proceeding to Japan, where he worked as a construction and factory worker for five years.

“I preferred Japan; my salary there was much higher. Moreover, the Japanese were generous.”

“What led you to think that would be the case?”

“I came to know that from an agent in Bangkok.”

“Didn’t you consider working in this country ... in a place such as Bangkok?”

“No, because the salaries were too low. In Saudi Arabia also, the salaries were too low. I could have survived had I not gone abroad, but I wanted more from life. However, one sometimes becomes poorer afterwards. For my part, I didn’t have a good experience working in Saudi Arabia, so I did not think of going anywhere but Japan for my next overseas employment.”

(Interview with S, 19 April 2000.)

This explanation confused Watabe, because S mixed his two experiences of working abroad in his stories. In particular, the reference to becoming poorer can be understood only in relation to the events that occurred after he returned from Japan. The year he returned, S bought two trucks in order to start a freight company, using the considerable amount of money he had saved in Japan. Unfortunately this project did not go smoothly, and the company finally went bankrupt in 1999, leaving S heavily in debt. Since he was personally liable for this debt, S lost the entire amount of 1 million baht that he had saved from his work in Saudi Arabia and Japan; moreover, he had to borrow another 700,000 baht from banks.

Although he thought of earning more for the sake of his family, the “solution” he drew from the outside job market looks quite different from that sought by previous informants. First, he considers his experience in Saudi Arabia a bad one, evaluating the salary he got there as low despite that fact that it was three to four times higher than what he could earn in Bangkok. Second, he had already had the vision to start something new during his stay, and even after his company failed he did not give up trying for “more from life”. Third, he came up with a good idea for financial recovery. Having sold his car and the greater part of his farm, he still retained enough land not only for his family’s sustenance

but also for raising ducks, chickens, pigs, and catfish on a commercial basis. In this way he could earn enough for his basic necessities and save sufficient capital to set up a small noodle restaurant on his premises – an enterprise he had begun just before Watabe next visited him two years later. He was able to use the profit he earned from the restaurant towards the debt repayment. Retaining enough of his remaining rice paddyfields for family sustenance was quite an efficient arrangement, as this way he could not only save on food expenses but also spend his afternoons performing additional commercial activities such as cattle raising or running the restaurant.

His actions, during both his good days and his bad days, are based on his desire to try something different. When Watabe talked with him about the youths of the village, he offered the unique opinion that “the era of rice farming is over”. When Watabe asked him to confirm this opinion, he answered:

What I have seen and experienced makes me believe so. These days, those with education can become officials, but those without education have no choice but to work in the fields or in the factories. In any case, farming does not attract people any more.

(Interview with S, 8 September 2005.)

This is unique among the informants as a clearly articulated opinion, but in fact most migrants try to save money so that their children can go to college and have “good jobs”. This is the missing link that leads us to a more adequate understanding of the most frequently expressed opinion of the migrants, that “there’s nothing here, no chance here”, regardless of the material wealth they have.

Though we can introduce only a few of the experiences Watabe collected from the villagers, they show us various aspects of the “solution” that migration offers. First, it is unrealistic to assume that the most effective “solution” for rural people is improving farm production when they have not lived on a single enterprise, namely that of “farmer”, within the area of the given land, namely “the village”, since long before *the era of migration* began (Castles and Miller, 1993). Second, the motives for moving and the solutions people draw from migration vary in relation to their unique conditions of insecurity or need, even within the same family or among similar individuals. Third, in spite of such variety among their solutions, when we focus on the allocation or distribution of the costs and benefits of migration, it becomes clear that migration has gradually turned from being a collaborative effort to sustain life (including those

who currently stay) to being a personal attempt to change the life of that person and the family. S's opinion is a version of a commonly shared analysis by anthropologists that nowadays, in local or rural people's world view, access to the "advanced" world has become more significant as a symbol of power than their traditional status within the village or the size of their land holdings (Gardner, 1995).

Solutions in the hands of those who do not move

These observations leave one important question: considering the views presented above, how can we understand what the possible "solutions" are for those who do not move? What made them choose to stay in the village even though quite a few people improve their lives by going away? These simple questions are, in fact, misleading. When we ask their reasons for "choosing to stay" we presume that they chose among multiple options either voluntarily or through force of necessity. Nevertheless, having heard the statements of those who have never tried migration, we doubt that there were other options for them in the literal meaning of the term. Mr C, our last informant, has worked for five years as the head of the subdistrict of which N village is a part. He lives with his wife, three daughters, and a son-in-law. Their income comes from three sources: 10,000 baht from selling sugar, C's salary as the head of the subdistrict, and that of his son-in-law who also works for the subdistrict office, which gives 36,000 baht in total. This means they have to live on less than 50,000 baht a year, which is a bit more than one-third of the average in the village. Nevertheless he says:

"No, I have never thought of [going away], since I was young. I will keep on farming here. I have so much to do here just in the way I have done it so far. I have never thought of looking for a job out of this village, and I am too old now. Our life is not that bad-off."

"How about your daughters?"

"Daughters ... well, they will go somewhere else when they graduate [from high school], I would like them to do as they want."

(Talk with C, 21 April 2000.)

Despite his opinion that they are not that badly off, their annual expenses amount to 80,000 baht as they have to pay back a 300,000 baht loan from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives. But

such statements that people are not badly off, that they don't need additional income, and that they are satisfied with their current livelihood are quite common among those who have never searched for jobs outside, even when their incomes are approximately average at best, or when they would be considered to be in debt according to our calculations.

In light of this, we may gain a better understanding of statements that they have never thought of going away to work when we consider that they may have avoided thinking of alternative possibilities rather than that they chose among options. The way they perceive their neighbours' successful experiences gives us an even clearer idea.

"There are many [people who go out in search of jobs], even to foreign countries, to Taiwan. I've never seen them contribute to the village, except that those working in Bangkok sometimes donate to the temple."

"Do they employ others while they go out and they are in need of farm labour?"

"No."

"Then you don't recognize any change since they began going out?"

"Everyone earns more and spends more for their family."

"Then how about any change in the village or for others?"

"No. Only their families change."

(Talk with a woman in P village, 28 August 2004.)

I don't know anything about those who go abroad. I will not visit their house even after they come back, as I don't want to bother them. I don't want them to think of me as visiting them to request money. So I always stay here, and see them only when they come here.

(Talk with a woman in N village, 2 September 2002.)

As the woman from N remarks, those who have no experience of labour migration may keep their distance from those who have come back from the city or foreign countries. In their narratives they avoid direct comparison of their lives with those of families who sent migrants away, and perceive that the changes the migrants bring in benefit only themselves, not the village as a whole. Only when asked by the interviewer do they compare their conditions with those of migrants.

“I don’t like anywhere [I have lived].”

“Then do you like here the best? Or do you also dislike it here?”

“I had no choice, as I have always been poor and have only managed to get by. Those who are better off can go wherever they like – ‘I love this place, I love that place’ – but I have just kept looking for the means of survival. This is why I couldn’t help my daughters graduate from high school.”

(Talk with a woman in P village, 16 August 2003.)

This statement is important in two points that are common to other such villagers. First, she compares her own experience and that of successful migrants in terms of a choice that only better-off villagers can make. Thus for her the difference between those who moved and those who did not (and those who moved but only for survival) is not what they chose, but whether they had any choice at all. Second, she connects her past condition of having no choice to the present result that her daughters could not graduate from high school. Wealth, as these villagers of the third type perceive it, is neither the purpose for nor the result of migration, but the condition that determines their possibility of migrating in the future.

This second point gives us another means to understand the way in which the non-migrants have avoided thinking of alternatives in a literal way. While they perceive that they do not need to alter their own livelihoods, without exception they want their children to study to as high a level as possible and get as good a job as possible. By “better jobs”, villagers mean government officials, engineers, policemen, doctors, and nurses, and most of these jobs are available only in the cities. Virtually no villagers want their children to stay on in the life they themselves have lived.

I am proud of having educated my children well so that they got good jobs. Imagine how hard the lives of farmers are. I don’t want them to undergo the kind of predicaments we faced. I hope to give them a delightful future.

(Interview with a woman in D village, 15 August 2003.)

Even though the villagers said they feel that farm machinery, fertilizers, and pesticides have made farming much easier than in the past, they also feel that such improvements do not provide them with the means to give a “delightful future” to their children. Some families of migrants emphasized that “there is nothing in the village” or “there is no

chance in the village”, which should be understood in this context. Compared to the other possibilities their children may now have, agriculture is not really a matter of choice any longer.

“Our lives will become harder unless my daughter remits money. Nothing will get better if she stays here and just grows rice. We just grow rice. We have only one income a year from rice.”

“What do you mean by ‘we just grow rice’?”

“We do so only because we have the land.”

(Talk with a woman in N village, 23 August 2002.)

Such statements show us that they consider it quite unrealistic to keep to the ways in which they have lived before. Besides, nearly all the “better jobs” are available only in cities, which means that the growth of agricultural production will not be their solution when they take into consideration the coming transition.

Yet in regards to this point, those who do not move have very little difference of opinion from the migrants like Mr S. Like Mr C, those who have never thought of moving separate the geographical ranges of their lives and livelihoods from those of their children and their neighbours who can move further afield. In reality, whether their children succeed in getting a “better job” or not, their lives in retirement will be supported at least partly by money the children send. This is the only way in which “the way they have done things before” continues to be a realistic “solution” for them. The responsibility to support the family on the part of overseas migrants, mentioned earlier, works for them on this basis.

In lieu of a conclusion

In rural areas of developing countries the development of a rural industry or job market does not always provide sufficient “solutions” that can make people believe in sustainable livelihoods. Unequally distributed opportunities to find jobs in cities or foreign countries do not lead only to the present income gap, but also to a fairly different range of choices for the future, and to the vulnerability or capability of one’s life in the end. Therefore we have to take Gardner’s (1995) statement that nowadays access to the “advanced” world has replaced land holdings or traditional status as the “power” sought and exercised in the local community one step further. Such power does not make a difference just to their current

income or social status, but above all to the capability to build their future.

What we learn from the lives of people “off” the move as well as people on the move is that we must recognize the local communities or local lives not in terms of absolute standards or values, but as standards and values that the people continually scrap and rebuild in their daily lives. Without this recognition, no security policy can be implemented in line with “the people’s own values and efforts”. We argued earlier that the human security perspective does not offer additional approaches or policy issues if we only try to understand migration from the perspective of HS, as conventional migration studies have dealt with many such issues already. Nevertheless, in concluding we must mention one additional reason for this. Conventional migration studies and policies are based on the assumption on the part of conventional “security” measures that “the local community” and “the local lives” should provide for the wealth and safety of the people and should be the solution to their current problems. In this view, migration is only a temporary remedy before the local society and economy develop and become stable. What this assumption has failed to capture, however, is the simple fact that people are always renewing their own sphere of living, sometimes in their local area and sometimes outside it.

Notes

1. Luechai, Korsieporn, and Phuangsaichai surveyed 990 individuals in the northern provinces of Thailand and found that migration status bore no significant relationship to the status of employment opportunity provided by the job creation programmes (Luechai, Korsieporn, and Phuangsaichai, 1982: 78–80).
2. That this phrase is often used as a title of migration studies (e.g. de Toito, 1990; Talbot and Thandi, 2004; Soda, 2007) also tells us that migration studies presume that people will not become “on the move” without particular reasons.
3. National Migration Surveys of Thailand also adopt this definition.
4. In particular, the National Economic and Social Economic Plans emphasized irrigation in their earlier stages, before the fifth plan issued in 1981.

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4

Rural changes and ageing in human security in northern Thailand

Liwa Pardthaisong-Chaipanich

This chapter investigates how recent demographic and socio-economic changes common to many areas of Southeast Asia have affected the lives of the rural ageing in a particular area, northern Thailand. Findings from this study show that the threats to the security of the rural ageing are a key concern for policy-makers at all levels. In particular, the rural environment needs to be redeveloped for the long-term sustainability and security of its population – including the ageing, who may not have enough income, savings, or access to resources to support their old age. Of further significance is the impact of HIV upon the ageing population. HIV has robbed many households of the young-adult, income-earning generation. This results in an overlap of two highly potent threats to human security in East Asia: unsupported, welfare-dependent rural elderly among the ageing population, including those who have lost their support from other members of the household, and the loss of those members themselves as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Introduction

Population ageing is a global phenomenon. According to Mujahid (2006), one in every five persons will be “old” by the middle of this century. East and Southeast Asia will apparently experience the highest rates of older population growth and will account for 35 per cent of the world’s older population by 2050 (ibid.). Within Southeast Asia, the impacts of rapid fertility change and the long period of below-replacement fertility on the

population structures of Singapore and Thailand have had serious implications for these countries' socio-economic development. The Singaporean government has long been aware of these ageing and low-fertility problems, and has taken several actions in relation to them during the past few decades.

The focus on Thailand is adopted because Thailand has been the leading indicator for a number of such economic and population shifts in the Asian region. In particular, it is representative of changes that are highly likely to occur in the developing countries of Southeast Asia in the near future. As yet the Thai government, like some others in the region, has not been very successful in coping with the current situation of ageing and lower fertility. Moreover, the ageing process in Thailand, as in some other countries in the region, has been influenced by other demographic forces to create a "double impact" on the population structure. This chapter focuses on the impact of such demographic forces on the human security of the rural ageing population, using in-depth research on northern Thailand as a representative study.

During the past four decades the northern region of Thailand has experienced remarkable demographic changes. These changes involve the three major components of population change: fertility, mortality, and migration. Firstly, the region has experienced a rapid fertility transition. Chiang Mai, the capital province of the north, was the first province outside Bangkok in which fertility started to decline as a result of the country's first non-governmental family planning programme. The influence this programme had on the urban and rural population was claimed as the major factor that caused Chiang Mai's total fertility rate to fall to replacement level within only 20 years between 1960 and 1980 (Pardthaisong, 1986). Secondly, the northern region has been hard hit by HIV/AIDS, and Chiang Mai is one of the provinces that was most affected, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, out-migration from rural villages has long been an important part of the lives of the northern Thai villagers.

All these demographic changes are known, from the experience of many other developing countries, to have major socio-economic repercussions. Myanmar has recorded high HIV prevalence rates outside major cities, and also a large number of out-migrants as well as a high old-age dependency ratio. But no comparable rural areas have experienced such a concentrated combination of the three demographic forces as we see in Chiang Mai province. This makes it ideal for a study with wider implications for the whole region. Some of these implications are discussed below.

In Viet Nam the gradual ageing of the population and its potential burden on the social welfare system will begin to make themselves felt within

the next 10 years (Nguyen, 2008). The old-age dependency ratio in Viet Nam is currently 8 per cent, and is expected to rise to 10 per cent within the next decade (UN Population Division, 2007). The prevalence rate of HIV in Viet Nam is reportedly still 0.5 per cent, but of the currently reported 290,000 HIV/AIDS cases, almost all (280,000) have been found in the 15–49-year-old age group – those responsible for the financial and physical care of their elderly (UNAIDS, 2008).

In Myanmar, if we take age 65 (already well past the official retirement age in Myanmar) as the beginning of old age, the old-age dependency ratio is currently 8.9 per cent. Taking age 60 as the cut-off point, the dependency ratio is as high as 13.9 per cent (Myanmar Ministry of Labour/UN Population Fund, 2006: 2). Those in the 15–49-year-old age group supporting these dependent elderly have an HIV prevalence rate of up to 2.2 per cent (high estimate), indicating up to 610,000 people. What is alarming is that the access to treatment for HIV-positive persons still remains very low. It is estimated that only 200 persons were receiving medication for HIV by 2004 (UNAIDS, 2005). Since HIV is highly likely to result in early loss of life for these younger adults, the elderly whom they support will face insecurities of income and care in the foreseeable future.

This chapter therefore aims to investigate the interactions of the three demographic forces currently shared throughout rural areas of Southeast Asia – lower fertility, HIV, and out-migration – as well as other inter-related socio-economic changes, and their implications for the lives of the rural ageing in Chiang Mai. Results from this study reflect the important way in which demographic and socio-economic changes can affect, and relate to, human security. The human security approach states that “anything which degrades [the people’s] quality of life – [such as] demographic pressures ... is a security threat” (Thakur, 1997). In addition, human security also means “protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 23). The three demographic changes mentioned above can be seen to have disrupted some of the patterns of daily life. It is hoped that lessons learned from this study can be applied to human security issues in other developing countries, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Research methodology

The quantitative and qualitative study for this chapter was conducted using aggregate data from several official and unofficial sources. The official sources were the secondary data on population and health statistics collected by the National Statistical Office, the Ministry of the Interior, and

the Ministry of Public Health, as well as UNAIDS. The unofficial sources were interviews with local key contacts and villagers, which are confidential. Primary data used in this study are based on the results of a survey conducted in 2006 in 22 selected rural villages of 2 subdistricts of Chiang Mai province. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with 300 households, key contact interviews, and participant observation.

Research findings

This section investigates the changes in rural areas by dividing them into two parts. Firstly, the demographic changes in fertility, HIV/AIDS-related mortality, and out-migration patterns will be discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the socio-economic changes in household size and family structure, and in the valuing of children and education, as well as the economic structure and land-use patterns. It should be noted that all these changes are complex and interrelated.

Demographic changes

Fertility

The rapid decline of fertility in Chiang Mai was a result of the country's earliest family planning programme being established by a Christian missionary physician at the McCormick Hospital in Chiang Mai city. This programme was introduced in 1963, seven years before the government programme. It started by using intrauterine devices (IUDs), but from 1965 it focused on the injectable contraceptive Depo Provera to establish what is believed to be the largest injectable contraceptive programme in the world (Pardthaisong, 1986). After the introduction of the programme, fertility began to decline rapidly in both urban and rural areas. Between 1960 and 1975 the total fertility rate in Chiang Mai fell by almost 50 per cent, reaching replacement level by 1980.

Since then, the total fertility rate in Chiang Mai province has not only remained below replacement level, but has continued to fall. The total fertility rate declined to about 1.5 in 1990 (Pardthaisong, 1998); in other words, to around the same level as in East Asian and European countries. The findings from this study pointed to the fact that 73 of the respondents who were married or had partners had only 1 or 2 children (fig. 4.1). The average number of live births was 2.2, but the average number of still-alive children was 1.97.

Through asking the informants about their view of the "appropriate" size for a Thai family, it was found that about 80 per cent of respondents thought that two children was the right number. Attitudes on family size

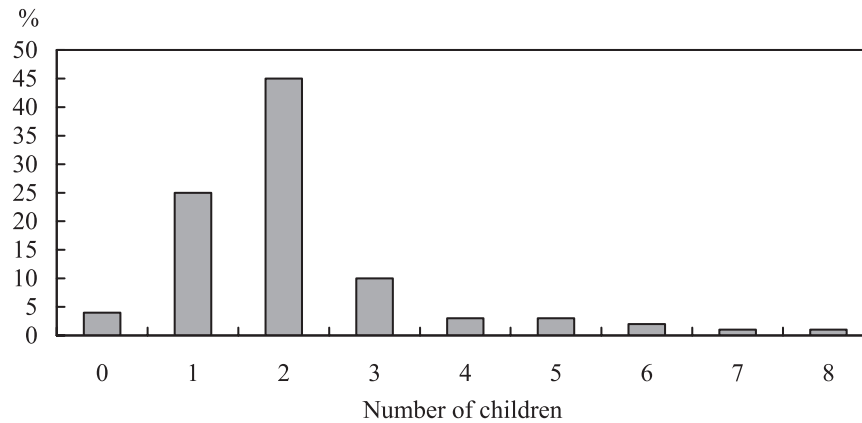


Figure 4.1 Number of children in the surveyed households

were also investigated by dividing the size of family into two groups: families with two children or fewer, and families with three or more children. Results indicated that many respondents had thought through several advantages and disadvantages of having a small family or a big family. However, economic factors are still the most important in determining the number of children in the family, particularly since the 1997–1998 economic crisis, and it is common for a family to have fewer children than the number originally planned or the number they think is appropriate. It is thus likely that the level of fertility in Chiang Mai in the next two to three decades or so will remain at much below replacement level, if not even lower.

HIV/AIDS-related mortality

HIV/AIDS-related mortality has played an important role in the overall mortality rate in Thailand since the late 1980s. The latest official number of HIV/AIDS-infected patients reported was 308,717 at the end of January 2007 (Department of Communicable Disease Control, 2007). It is widely known, however, that this figure is lower than the actual one, due in some part to a degree of under-reporting, and also due to the complexity of the disease. An earlier estimate by the Thai Working Group on HIV/AIDS Projection (2001) was 1,092,327 persons. More recently, the AIDS Cluster of the Ministry of Public Health used an unpublished 2007 estimate by the same working group of 1,102,628 persons, almost 4 times higher than the official figure (Department of Communicable Disease Control, 2007). The eight upper northern provinces,¹ though they have only about 9 per cent of the country's population, accounted for 25 per cent of all HIV/AIDS-infected patients in Thailand. Among these

Table 4.1 People living with HIV/AIDS in the study areas, 2006

Study areas	Number of people living with HIV/AIDS		
	Male	Female	Total
Subdistrict A	11	16	27
Subdistrict B	2	3	5
Total	13	19	32

provinces, Chiang Mai had the largest number of infections until the year 2000.

Within Chiang Mai province, the city of Chiang Mai had the highest number of HIV/AIDS-infected patients: about 2,300 up to the end of 2006 (Chiang Mai Provincial Health Office, 2006). The numbers in the 2 outlying study areas were also among the top 5, at 1,365 and 1,614 respectively. Although the incidence of newly infected HIV cases in Chiang Mai has decreased overall since 2000, findings from this study suggest that new HIV cases have emerged in recent years, and that the sex ratio of the infected cases has shifted. The number of female cases is now outnumbering males (table 4.1), with a sex ratio of 68. Another significant finding was that HIV-infected patients now tend to live longer, with much better healthcare access, compared to those of the 1990s.

Interestingly, the majority (96 per cent) of the respondents had a basic understanding of and knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Their perception of the AIDS situation was that it was not as “frightening” as it was in the 1990s, but neither were they totally unaware of the current problem. Although 42 per cent of the respondents thought that AIDS was not a problem at all, 29 per cent thought it was, and 24 per cent thought it was only a minor problem. Such perceptions play an important role in terms of personal and community awareness, and also in terms of disease prevention and control strategies. Therefore it is significant that when asked about their view of AIDS in the future, 66 per cent of respondents thought that the situation would improve due to the knowledge and awareness of AIDS among villagers. Another 14 per cent, in contrast, thought the situation would become worse, since there is no cure for AIDS and it spreads so quickly and easily, with or without the awareness of infected persons.

Out-migration

Migration information in most official statistical reports in Thailand does not capture the complexity of “circular” migration. For example, it is normal for most migrants to leave their names listed on the household registration form in their rural place of origin, even when they migrate

for a lengthy period, rather than re-registering at their destination. As this portion of the study aims to investigate the complexity of labour migration in rural villages where authoritative data are lacking, every effort has been made to obtain accurate migration data. This survey defines household members as those who are listed on the household registration form, plus anyone else regarded by the respondent as staying there. The pattern of residential attachment to the household found in this study was that 8 per cent of the registered members were away for more than nine months in the year.

Among those members who were away, 75 per cent were in the 15–39 age group, reflecting the age selectivity of the migration pattern. In addition, the pattern of gender selectivity in the study areas showed that migration was balanced between male and female migrants. This reflects the Thai cultural norm that females are expected to contribute as much as males to the family's material welfare.

Socio-economic changes

The following sections analyse the ways in which the demographic changes discussed above are related to, and affected by, the socio-economic structure of the rural villages.

Household size and family structure

The maximum number of household members found in this study was 11. Figure 4.2 shows that 66 per cent of the total households had four family

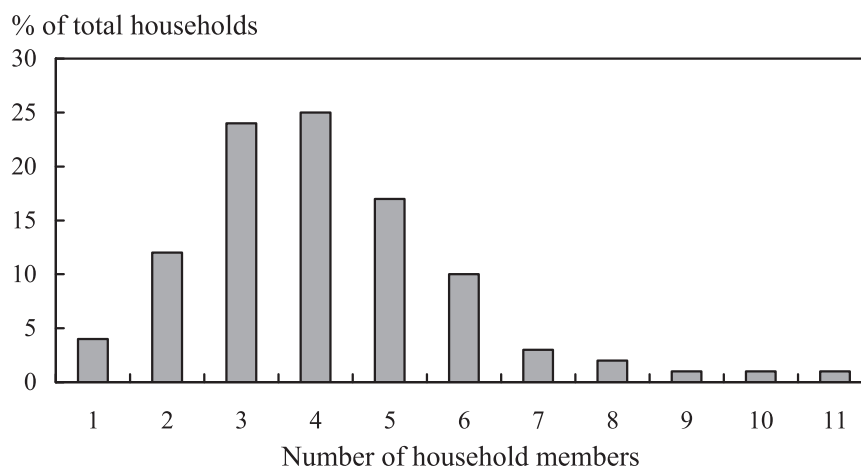


Figure 4.2 Number of household members in the surveyed households

members or fewer, 17 per cent had five members, and another 17 per cent had six members or more. The average number of household members was four, and over 70 per cent of the total households were nuclear families.

Perceived value of children

The findings from this study suggest that the value of children in the rural community has now changed. Traditionally, having children was regarded as beneficial – particularly in the sense that children provide more labour for household farming, and also help with housework and family duties. Since the onset of compulsory schooling and the promulgation of the educational system, however, children have been largely removed from household production activities, and the cost of providing for children in terms of uniforms, fees, books, and other materials has been increasing. This anticipated high expense for schooling seems to be the most important factor for parents in deciding the number of children they want. Moreover, the influence of the mass media and improvements to the transportation system have given villagers more opportunity than ever before to learn about the “wider” world outside the village. The phenomenon of rising aspirations for the standard of living in terms of material goods has clearly impacted on the desired number of children. Parents have opted for smaller family size, and often consciously decide to buy material goods rather than rearing children. This kind of substitution effect has been found in rural Chiang Mai since the 1980s (Pardthaisong, 1986). Therefore, it is now common for Thais to take the view that having children is having more costs: more children means more expenditure and fewer children means less expenditure.

Education

One of the advantages of having fewer children is that parents are able to provide higher education for their children, especially beyond the compulsory level.² This kind of advantage used to be described as “by far the most significant short-term gain that family planning programmes may achieve” (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1997). However, the impact of the current rapid fertility decline on education can be seen in the declining number of children in primary schools in rural villages. Some local schools had to be closed down because of this. By 1990 10 per cent of the government primary schools throughout Chiang Mai province had been closed down (Pardthaisong, 1992). Although some might argue that many parents prefer to send their children to school in the district centres or Chiang Mai city, the results from this study indicated that small children in rural areas were much more likely to be sent to local schools for primary education, regardless of the accessibility of city schools.

Regarding the advantage derived from educational improvements among families with fewer children, this study found that among the adult household members (excluding those who were currently studying), 56 per cent had only four to six years of compulsory education while 12 per cent had not completed their compulsory education. Another 11 per cent had completed lower-secondary education, 8 per cent had completed upper-secondary education, 6 per cent had gone on to technical college or vocational education, and about 7 per cent had a university education.

The above figures indicate that the overall educational level in the rural villages was still quite low. However, the proportion of people with a higher educational level is increasing, as the rural population has seen the importance of education as a vital means to improve their social and economic status. This can be seen among those household members who were currently studying, where 55 per cent were at primary level or lower and 30 per cent were at secondary level. A significant proportion, 9 per cent, were at university level, followed by 6 per cent at technical college or vocational level and 1 per cent at postgraduate level.

Economic structure

Occupation

It is evident that agriculture is no longer the main occupation in rural communities in the way it was in the past. The results from this study showed that only 19 per cent of the total households engaged in farming as their main occupation. Among this proportion, 8 per cent did only rice farming, while the rest integrated rice farming with the production of cash crops during the off-farm season. It should be noted that a significant proportion of households (64 per cent of the total) also engaged in orchard farming and other cash cropping, such as cultivation of longan, lychees, onions, soybeans, and vegetables. However, this is not their main occupation.

The majority of the working population worked as day labourers (34 per cent), while about 23 per cent worked as employees in the private sector. About 15 per cent engaged in commerce and small business, and only 3 per cent worked as civil servants.

The increasing role of non-farm occupations is believed to be the result of education, as well as changes in social values and the rising cost of living. Family members who were “educated” tend to look for non-farm jobs that would give them a more reliable income, and thus some sort of “economic security” as well as “higher social status”. Farming had come to be viewed as the work of the old or of the parents’ generation. The young or new generation, who are an important age group for maintaining the economic base of the local communities, have totally ignored

farm work and turned to non-farm jobs. Therefore, a concern about the disappearance of the knowledge necessary for rice cultivation has recently been raised among many of the “old” villagers.

Income and savings

The average household income found in this study was 13,480 Thai baht (about US\$385³) per month, or about 3,370 baht per person per month for the average household of 4 members. Approximately 60 per cent of the surveyed households had no savings at all. Half of those households with some savings had less than 20,000 baht. Moreover, around 80 per cent of the surveyed households were in debt. The main sources of their loans were the village fund, the agricultural bank, and private loans.

Land-use patterns

In the last 20 years land prices in rural areas of Chiang Mai have risen dramatically, including in the study areas. Many people have sold their lands, and the land-use pattern has shifted dramatically from farmland to residential areas, hotels, and resorts. As a result, about 38 per cent of the total surveyed households did not own any land (apart from a small piece on which the house was located). Another 43 per cent had less than 5 rai,⁴ 10 per cent had between 6 and 10 rai, and only 9 per cent had more than 10 rai.

The implications of rural changes on ageing security

Evidence in the previous section shows that the rural villages in Chiang Mai have been transformed, demographically and socio-economically. The interaction among a rapid fertility transition and low fertility rate, HIV/AIDS-related mortality, and the continuing out-migration has brought about a process of rapid population ageing. Figure 4.3 illustrates how these demographic forces interact and impact on the size and proportion of the ageing population. Figure 4.4 shows the proportion of the surveyed population divided into three age cohorts: children, adults, and the ageing. It can be seen that the proportion of the ageing was above the national average (10 per cent) in about 14 per cent of the total surveyed population. There is no doubt that the growing size of the ageing cohort is now, and will continue to be, a major focus for policy planning at all levels.

With the financially driven decrease in the value of children, it was interesting to investigate whether parents would expect support from their children when they get older. The results showed that 84 per cent of the

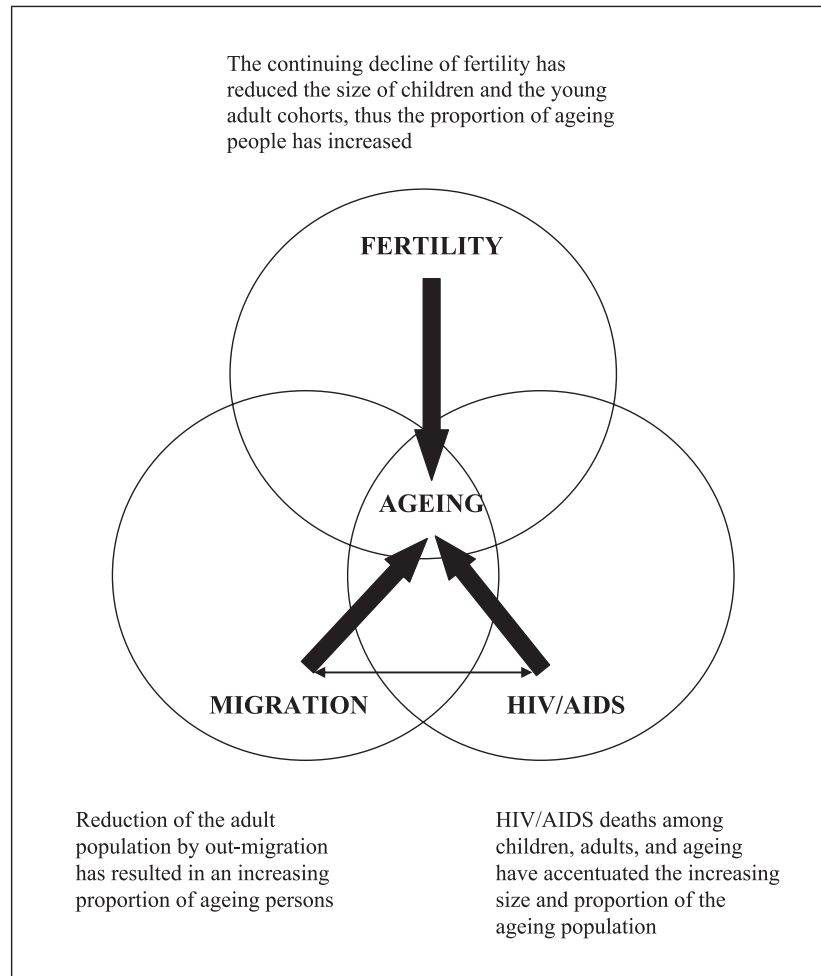


Figure 4.3 Impact of low fertility, HIV/AIDS-related mortality, and out-migration interactions on the size and proportion of the ageing population

respondents expected children to live within the household when they get older. Moreover, 87 per cent expected care and support from their children.

This high expectation that parents place on their children reflects the fact that children are the most important means of social and economic security for most parents in rural areas. It is important to note that even though the government has provided some kinds of “social security” schemes for the elderly, most people are excluded because they have

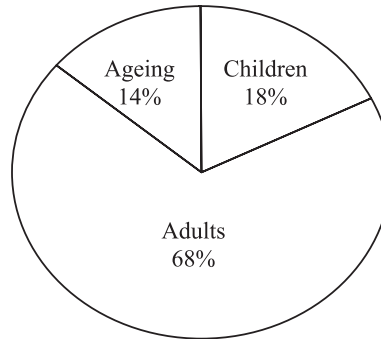


Figure 4.4 Proportions of children, adults, and ageing in the surveyed population

not been involved in the formal sector of employment to which these schemes are often linked. In addition, some of the health insurance schemes provided by the government have not played much role in enhancing overall social or human security. When the question on sources of economic/financial support was asked, almost 70 per cent mentioned that they expected such support from their children, while 18 per cent looked to their own savings, 11 per cent expected support from both sources, and fewer than 1 per cent mentioned support from the government retirement fund.

Yet, in the era of HIV/AIDS, many parents had lost either their only child, some of their children, or even all their children through HIV/AIDS-related mortality, and this presents enormous problems for the human security of the older generation as well as for the household generally. The findings from this study suggested that a significant proportion (26 households) had lost their child/children through HIV/AIDS. It is evident, as found in other studies (Jones and Pardthaisong, 2000; Pardthaisong-Chaipanich, 2003, 2004; Knodel and VanLandingham, 2003; Knodel and Im-em, 2004), that households which have/had HIV/AIDS-impacted member(s) have experienced profound physical, psychological, and socio-economic problems. In some cases the return to the village of adult children with HIV/AIDS has been an unavoidable situation for many older parents.

Further, since most HIV/AIDS patients are or will become single, it is seen as the parents' role to care for them. Not only is there a lack of income from the HIV/AIDS patient, but the time spent in taking care of patients reduces the working hours and the income of other members of the household. Even in the case of married children living elsewhere, it is customary for those with HIV/AIDS to return to their original home and parents in the final stages of AIDS. Moreover, in closely knit village

communities, HIV/AIDS has affected more than just those nuclear families with HIV/AIDS patients: while some households do have or have had HIV/AIDS members, a remarkable 56 per cent of households cited someone close to them, such as an immediate family member or relative, who was HIV/AIDS-positive and in need of support.

Considering these interactions among demographic features, one can see that the state of “security” of the lives of the rural ageing is questionable or even alarming. Factors such as living in a nuclear family with few children, having little or no education, and having (some) children who have migrated to work elsewhere or who have lost their lives through HIV/AIDS infection or other causes have increased the level of “insecurity” for the rural ageing in northern Thailand. Moreover, most of them do not have land, property, or pensions, let alone adult children who could live with them and take care of them. Who will they rely upon for care and support, especially as they enter the “old” ageing stage (75 years and over), when more intensive care is needed? The answer remains unclear, even to themselves.

Discussions and policy recommendations

It is clear that when these demographic forces are combined with the ongoing socio-economic changes described here, the lives of the ageing in rural villages of northern Thailand, and indeed throughout the Greater Mekong subregion, are becoming “uncertain” or even “insecure”. It is to be expected that this insecurity will also be found in other rural parts of Thailand and other developing countries in Southeast Asia, given the presence of similar demographic forces and their interaction. In Indonesia, for example, the proportion of the ageing population is increasing significantly as a result of the falling fertility rate, and questions on the role of government in supporting the majority of the elderly have already been raised (Kreager, 2003).

It is important to note that, like other Southeast Asian countries where the majority of the population still reside in rural areas, rural Thailand is the home of approximately 80 per cent of the country’s ageing population. However, under the changing socio-economic circumstances, rural life is becoming less and less attractive to the younger generation. Younger people nowadays are physically less attached to rural areas as a way of life or a major source of income, and are more likely to rely on the “life” outside the village. They are only attached to the rural “space” in terms of their social contacts and as a place where the family home is located. Therefore, not only is there now a lack of adult members in the ageing households, but the importance that was once placed on the role

of the ageing in the community is now decreasing in the rapidly changing rural society.

Currently, the number and proportion of the ageing in Thailand as a whole are increasing significantly. The ageing population increased from 1.21 million (4.6 per cent) in 1960 to 4.02 million (7.4 per cent) in 1990, and will reach 10.78 million (15.3 per cent) by 2020 (Jitapunkul and Bun-nag, 1999). Although the First Long-term Plan for the Elderly was issued in 1986 by the National Committee for the Elderly, it is claimed that there has been little progress in action taken, particularly between 1982 and 1991 (*ibid.*). Subsequent programmes and plans included a free medical care programme by the Ministry of Public Health, begun in 1989 for the disadvantaged ageing and later extended to cover all persons aged 60 and above. Later, the Second Long-term Plan for the Elderly (1992–2011) was issued. This plan generally aims to provide basic healthcare and welfare services, to support the role of the ageing in the family and community, and to disseminate knowledge on the ageing person's self-adjustment. In 1993 the Department of Public Welfare started a programme to provide monthly subsistence allowances for the indigent elderly in rural areas. The provision for an allowance of 200 baht per month has been expanded to the current 300 baht for the rural ageing.

As for the ongoing Five-Year National Social and Economic Development Plans, the concerns about ageing issues were clearly addressed in the Eighth Plan (1997–2001). This plan addressed the need to promote proper healthcare, support, and security for the ageing as well as attempting to bolster traditional forms of social and institutional support rather than completely replacing them with what would be prohibitively expensive government provisions.

With the rapidly changing population structure, it should be noted that most of the ageing in Thailand at present are regarded as the relatively “young” ageing (aged under 75), which means that they are still able to work and look after themselves physically. But in the next decade or so, when these people enter the age range of 75 and over, the healthcare and support systems will be under a great strain. Considering the difficult circumstances of the rural ageing found in this study, the relevant urgent and long-term ageing-related issues need to be raised in order to contribute to the policy options.

Firstly, some implications of the rapid fertility transition and the two decades of below-replacement fertility level reviewed in this study have not yet met with any direct response from Thai policy-makers. The population policy in Thailand since the Eighth Five-Year National Social and Economic Development Plan (1997–2001) has shifted its focus away from “quantity” of the population (birth control), as in the previous Third to Seventh Plans, and on to support for “quality of life”.

The question for the changing Southeast Asian region generally is: will a “quality of life” approach alone be sufficient to sustain human security in this era of a rapidly changing population structure? Should Thailand aim for a pro-natalist policy like that of other low-fertility societies in the region? If so, to what level should the fertility rate be promoted, and how? Any attempts or strategies to increase fertility will not be as easy as bringing down the fertility rate was, as has been seen repeatedly in some pro-natalist developed countries where measures like marriage and maternity grants, child bonuses, and family allowances have been introduced with only limited success.

Secondly, and in common with the rest of the region, HIV/AIDS prevention and control strategies should have a greater focus on vulnerable groups like migrant workers, as well as the newly emerging high-risk groups of teenagers, students, and young adults. As the experience of migration is closely related to HIV/AIDS infection among the rural population, more accurate migration data are needed for better access to healthcare among migrants in particular. A most basic policy recommendation for migration data collection is that the current place of residence should be clearly distinguished from the usual place of residence.

Thirdly, as this chapter has pointed out, the interaction among demographic and socio-economic changes in the rural villages will probably affect the traditional social-institutional support for the ageing. Therefore, ageing care and support should be integrated into overall rural development planning, in order to reduce the flow of migration from rural areas and strengthen the family values and capacity for family support. Basic infrastructure and more reliable employment opportunities in the rural villages, for instance, will help to slow down rural-to-urban migration.

Fourthly, the increasing proportion of the ageing, the higher life expectancy, and the longevity of ageing females have brought with them issues of intensive healthcare and support for this growing population group. The healthcare system will have to focus more on long-term chronic diseases, which are currently increasing, and other such health-related problems. Finally, the monthly subsistence allowance for the rural ageing of approximately 300 baht is clearly not enough, and should be increased to a reasonable amount. It should be borne in mind that only some of the rural ageing now qualify for such allowances. The qualifying person needs to be someone aged over 60 who has inadequate income or cannot work, and is of necessity left without any caregiver. The findings from this study showed that many ageing, although qualified, had not received such allowances at all; and in some cases those qualified had not received the full amount. These problems need to be taken seriously, particularly by the local administrators who take responsibility for selecting qualified cases and giving such allowances. Moreover, it must be recognized that

when these rural ageing enter the age range of 75 or over and they can no longer work for extra income, their material and financial support will be under enormous strain – particularly for those who are single, widowed, or without children.

Conclusions

Human resources are the most important and powerful agent of any development. When population size and composition have been affected, they will, in turn, affect the social environment to which they belong or within which they interact, and thus will affect the human security of that environment. This chapter has clearly pointed out that the interaction between low fertility, the continuing out-migration, and HIV/AIDS-related mortality among young and middle-aged adults has brought about a changing population structure, and with it new human insecurities and needs. The numbers of children, and of the young adults who are the most economically active age group, are declining, while the size of the ageing population is increasing significantly. Under these ongoing demographic and socio-economic changes, the lives of the rural ageing are becoming a major part of the human security concerns of the region. Thus the overall rural environment needs to be redeveloped for the long-term sustainability and security of its population.

The entire Southeast Asian region is facing or will soon face several interrelated insecurities, as indicated in this chapter: the insecurity of ageing due to the lack of a pension system or medical insurance at the national level; the loss of financial and physical caregivers for the elderly due to the death of younger adults from HIV/AIDS; and, economically, the loss of the “demographic dividend” that will soon accompany the rapid ageing of their populations (see Wongboonsin in this volume). What is needed in the short term is a policy that will operate at both national and local levels, to take into account the significant differences in human security needs arising among urban and rural areas and their demographics.

Notes

1. Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Phayao, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son.
2. At present, compulsory education in Thailand is for nine years: six years of primary education and three years of lower-secondary education.
3. One US dollar is approximately 35 Thai baht (as of June 2007).
4. A land unit in Thailand, equal to 0.4 acre.

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Part II

Intervening in human insecurity

5

Landlessness and development: Policy purposes and policy outcomes in Southeast Asia

Lynn Thiesmeyer

Land is the ultimate resource, for without it life on earth cannot be sustained.
(UN Economic Commission for Europe, 1996: 3)

Introduction

Human security has as its most fundamental meaning access to physical safety and basic well-being. The post-war era originally saw notions of human security being related to human rights. Article 3 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 included the phrase “security of person” without specifically defining it. Subsequent attempts to specify the link between the rights and the security of humans produced such broad definitions as “freedom from danger, poverty, or apprehension” (Lonergan, 1997). With the changes in global development policy and planning that began in the 1970s, however, definitions of human security, as opposed to national or military security, became more concretely based on the UN’s already existing definitions of basic human needs. By the time of the UNDP’s first *Human Development Report* (United Nations Development Programme, 1994), the new categories of threats to human security had been established. This focus allowed basic human needs issues to impact more directly on the earlier-established issues of rights and national security. At the same time, the concrete issues of basic human needs policy planning began to focus ideas of human security in another direction: on to individuals and communities, and their

*Human insecurity in East Asia, Umegaki, Thiesmeyer, and Watabe (eds),
United Nations University Press, 2009, ISBN 978-92-808-1164-3*

specific experiences as they themselves articulate them. In consequence, we can more clearly see the ways in which the effects of globalization, including entry into international markets, greater movement of people, and the greater demand on environmental resources, directly affect the personal and local human insecurities that developing countries' populations face on a daily basis.

Human insecurity concepts reflect the basic assumption that developing countries will rely on the developed countries' economic, political, and military systems. As such, the attempt to overcome human insecurity is of necessity a globalized, transnational, and ongoing effort. After the Second World War, along with military aid to less-developed countries came the economic and social forms of aid that aimed to reduce social conditions that are seen as giving rise to political instability: poverty, famine, displacement from home and land, and deprivation of access to other social benefits such as education and healthcare. Human security policies thus assume, and seem to necessitate, "global" – that is, transnational and cross-border – policies and implementation by first world actors. In this framework it is no good protecting the security only of Thailand, for example, if the security of neighbouring Myanmar is supposed to be questionable. With the new human security framework, advanced nations are announcing that they no longer offer aid in the limited realm of economic assistance. Rather, they will involve themselves with the definitions, policies, and practices of human security in other less-developed nations in order to protect their own national human security, and they will do so on a global scale. In this way the entire process of shaping, targeting, and implementing policies for human insecurity intertwines itself with issues of globalization and, in so doing, again with economic development. Human security is, in fact, a globalized process itself. Thus we can say that along with economic globalization, the globalization of (under) human security has also penetrated into the lives and environments of people in developing countries, affecting them in ways they may or may not have foreseen.

Further, human security is better known by its absence than its presence. There are two ways of identifying human insecurity. One is to identify basic needs and their fulfilment, with a lack in some area of human security indicating the lack of fulfilment of certain of these needs. But the second way is to identify human security in the abstract *only by* its absence, or in other words as something that can only be absent or unfulfilled. As a conceptual model, then, human security is something that is measured according to its incompleteness. Inevitably, those regions identified as lacking human security are isomorphic with regions that have previously been defined as less developed. On the other hand, regions

that do the identifying and implementing of human security are regions that are already defined as more highly developed.

Yet is it appropriate to describe human security in terms of regions, as though there were geographical and spatial conditions to human security? Naturally not. “Regions” are used metaphorically to refer to the populations residing in them, who are apparently responsible for the level of human security they have been identified as having. If it is low, the citizens and residents as well as policy-makers in those regions can be designated to receive development assistance and projects from advanced countries – projects that will use some amount of the land and its resources in new ways. As such, a region is also a territory, a country, or a local community, and in this way “regions” are indeed used as spatial terms to identify the location of those natural resources that are currently needed by developed and developing countries. In all cases, a region is land: the basis for all natural as well as technological resources and production.

The international Commission on Human Security, formed in 2000 to survey the seven categories of human security, was chaired by Japanese Foreign Ministry representative Sadako Ogata and Nobel Laureate in economics Amartya Sen.¹ In its final report, produced in 2003, the commission mentioned quite briefly in a one-page “Special Issues” text box that:

Land degradation in some areas has severely impaired land productivity. In 1977, 57 million people failed to produce enough food to sustain themselves as a result of land degradation. By 1984, this number had risen to 135 million. Natural disasters such as droughts can also have terrible multiple impacts on people. (Commission on Human Security, 2003)

What the commission mentions only in this text box is actually a vast, defining issue in any attempt to identify or promote sustainable human security. The text did not mention that its examples of droughts and famines were due in large part to national and global policies that had emphasized one sort of development policy: the kind that strips land and basic resources without replacing them, the kind that is neither sustainable nor compatible with human security.

Productive land and its role in staving off destitution are, of course, dependent not only on its availability and size but also on its usability, in terms of climate and environmental status. Gommers et al. (2004) point out that deforestation, flooding, drought, food insecurity, and changes in water supply all affect each other. In the Asian region many of these ecological disasters have in recent years resulted from development policies that led to environmental mismanagement. Further, although developed

countries' food supplies are also affected, it is the food producers in rural developing regions that are in closest contact with the consequences of deforestation, drought, and food shortages. It is thus their local food supply that is most directly impacted. The primary cycle in this process is that lack of access to land pushes mobility to seek jobs and income, mobility both induces and spreads high health risks from contagious disease, and heightened health problems and morbidity in turn cause greater poverty. But in terms of all poverty issues, Alan Smith (1997) adds that the greatest vulnerability among the rural poor is precisely the malnutrition and loss of immunity that results from poor access to land. This causes a subsequent weakening or destruction of the community's security, and therefore a reduced capacity to take on other work or create opportunities or initiatives. When we talk about relative poverty versus absolute poverty, it is often the determining factor of land, that most universal and basic of assets, that draws the line. For those without it in rural Asia, poverty is likely to be absolute. "Land poverty" will be used here to mean having no access to land or to so little land that any production or earnings from it do not sustain the entire household throughout a 12-month period. Unfortunately for the human security of rural Southeast Asia, "at the village level, it is often found that very few people control farm and pasture land" (Veerawongs and Narumon, 2006: 84).

In the modern legal systems adopted by Thailand, Viet Nam, and Indonesia, nearly all previously recognized material resources, like the land itself, have been defined, mapped, and codified, whether they are clearly visible to their ordinary users or not. It is only in recent years, with the coming of human security, that such elements have been mapped for what is intended to be human-security-related uses. There were, however, prior security mechanisms existing within communities and across regions of Southeast Asia before modern economic development and human security interventions. Most of these customary measures involved the distribution and use of land as the primary resource. What follows is a consideration of the meaning of land within the rural system of values, followed by a return to the consideration of human security policies as outlined above.

Valuing land

Under the globalization of markets, production, and employment, local communities in development modify their existing and traditional security structures in a variety of ways. Some aspects of globalization threaten their previous order, including their environmental security and food security. Other aspects of globalization may offer greater security, whether

of income or educational opportunities. In addressing these more local, more traditional, and more human types and needs in security, however, we must first make a clearer conceptual and logical distinction between those things that are thought to be *elements* of potential human security and those things that are perceived by their possessors as actually *being* human security. In rural Southeast Asia, which still contains the majority of the region's populations, it is land that is seen as the basis for human security and without which security is absolutely compromised or destroyed. It is this that quite literally grounds human security in the contested, and shifting, realities of daily life in a developing rural region. Whether we seek to understand the "cycle of poverty", the cluster of errors that produce "bad development", or the cause-and-effect relationship among political, environmental, and economic crises, it must be acknowledged that there are multiple and mutually impacting features of human insecurity that require a holistic approach. The contestation over the meaning, allocation, and use of land in the past century shows its significance to all other, local and global, measures of security as well as allowing differing approaches in the search for more responsive policies.

First, one of the universal tenets of human security is "sufficiency". The opposites of "sufficiency" in terms of food, healthcare, and access to education and employment are the human insecurity components of incurable disease, cross-border movement, and the early stage of economic development that pushes populations unskilled and untrained in modern employment to take on high risks. These are the risks associated with selling their property, dropping out of school to work, migrating, and engaging in dangerous work in unhealthy conditions. These "risks" are, in fact, rooted in the threats to human security that prevail in the developing world: joblessness, landlessness, lack of education, lack of access to adequate nutrition, and lack of access to "secure" (security-offering) human and social networks. Among these, land poverty pushes the other threats in ways that have not been adequately studied nor adequately addressed by national policy.

Second, whether human insecurity is discussed at the international policy level or experienced at the village level, it always consists of two or more factors that are inextricably entwined. Perhaps because of the origins of the human security concept within the basic human needs paradigm, human insecurity is never conceptualized and never identified as a single entity. Absolute poverty, for example, is frequently considered along with other factors such as landlessness, low education, illiteracy, disease, and crime. Which of these are causes and which are results has long been debated. Yet unless we formulate clear notions of what specific factors are interlinked and how they interact, human security will remain elusive in rural Asia.

The average per capita income in rural Thailand, in households where money is earned, ranges from US\$1,500 per year down to about \$300 depending on the location. The average per capita income in the whole of Viet Nam starts at the low end of the Thai income scale; for rural Vietnamese it goes as low as US\$50, not including households where no money is earned at all. The average in Indonesia is over \$1,000 per year, an estimate that is skewed towards those in urban areas, with cash incomes of as little as \$10 for the rural poor (Strauss et al., 2002: 27). For those at the low end, debt and the desperate search for the collateral needed to obtain or prolong loans are an ever-present fact of life. For those with the small amount of property needed on which to live, a substantial debt burden may be incurred to buy or build a house, for inexpensive transportation, and for other currently necessary expenditure. Research by the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) also confirms that those with the least economic security continue to incur crippling debts: “those with monthly incomes under 900 baht had debt of 9.8 times their income, while those with monthly incomes under 720 baht had debt of 19.8 times income” (Yuthamanop, 2003). We can see that in the poorest households, where annual expenditure is equal to or in excess of annual income, the threat or reality of human insecurity will hurl the family into further human insecurities. These include destitution and its consequent malnutrition and illness, loss of access to education, and the necessity of losing house and property. The already insecure landless family has no savings, property, or better-earning job skills. Such households fall further and further into debts they cannot repay and sacrifice more and more of their basic needs, including food consumption. When a large proportion of a village is experiencing such impacts, both the impacts and the burden on the entire community are significant, in some cases reversing the community’s economic development and taking it back a matter of decades.

Human security in the least-developed areas of the world would be defined by those who lack it as a life-or-death matter. Staying alive, whether as an infant, child, youth, or adult, is necessarily seen as the first and sometimes only condition of human security and the incontrovertible criterion of any other conditions. The chronic problems that threaten life, and undermine the conditions under which daily life can be conducted, are food insecurity and serious illness. Under globalization, these two have been highlighted as both causes and effects of human insecurity. Their relation to each other, and to human insecurity generally, has everything to do with land and its allocation or reallocation. Further, in developing areas it has to do with the “disappearance” of land – its appropriation for non-subsistence purposes and in some cases its resulting non-viability.

Throughout the stages of development, land has been viewed in a host of different ways by different stakeholders. As shown below, from the largest meaning of the earth or world, land as a *space* can be taken to mean country, territory, geography, or surface, and from there on down to property and estate, and finally to ground and soil.

- Country/territory (national land): political and economic “space” for possession, accumulation, and defence. This includes geography, cadastral measurement and delineation, border drawing and security or porosity, and resource securing.
- “Property” under modern law: land as primarily monetary and private value, including “productive” (or subsistence) value, sale value, and assessed value as collateral for loans.
- “Ground”, soil, field: a “commons” productive of primary and secondary sustainable resources.

Obviously, the first two categories of modern land designations above clash with the third, more traditional, designation. Yet paradoxically, policy attempts to enhance human security by redistributing land in the Southeast Asian region have at times backfired. First, for reasons described below, in the areas of greatest need, the rural areas, land reforms have been fraught with legal loopholes and extra-legal exceptions allowing non-state and non-individual entities to appropriate large tracts of land. Moreover, many reforms have succeeded in further isolating and pauperizing the land-poor among the rural population by making legal ownership and transfer of land a matter of administrative competence as well as of ability to pay administrative fees. Second, any reform, however well intentioned, can generate a class of the disenfranchised or disempowered, those who are not helped but are harmed by it. When land rights are reformed or land is redistributed, those who lose land in the process will attempt to seek new land, or merely a place to live, or a place to work outside of their lost land. In this new process of displacement, as the UN’s Human Development Index makes clear, migration, poverty, low education, and gender disparity are linked with each other and with human security concerns. At the lowest level, labour migration patterns in impoverished rural communities stem from the changing kinds of human insecurity that rural development brings with it. This includes loss of land through sale to gain cash income and reallocation of land to industries. Further, where a large proportion of a population is under-educated, it makes migration for unskilled and seasonal labour the only choice for wage income. And the poorer the worker – both in terms of landlessness and in terms of educational attainment – the greater his or her chance of working in a highly risky environment that presents threats of injury or epidemic disease. Finally, modern legal systems that designate males as household heads and the sole or primary

owners and inheritors of land can deeply threaten household and community food security. In developing countries in Africa and Asia, women bear more than 50 per cent of the burden of providing food and income for rural households. With limited or no access to productive land, women and the households that depend on them come to face food and income insecurity.

We can now look briefly at examples of two policies, land reform and decentralization, and at examples of local institutions that make “policies” of a lower order, to discern what can go right or wrong with policies that are intended to enhance human security.

National policies

First, in the case of land reforms, we actually see an increasing loss of access to land and its economic potential by the rural poor, for several reasons. Since 1942 Thailand has specified exactly which lands were national territories to be controlled by the government; according to the language of the law, these were “the King’s lands”, implying potential for the people’s right to use them, but in practice they were controlled and used by national and provincial governments.² In 1975 there were two new land bills. The first was for the “redesignation, preservation and management” of government land, which allowed centrally appointed governing élites to designate, own, and control the use of rural land. This bill concerned “the King’s lands”, and stated that the Ministry of Finance would control such lands and other lands “acquired from other Ministries”. It also mixed the controlling ministries in ways that were impossible for local residents to understand – the Ministry of Land, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of the Interior all had to be consulted whenever a change in a district’s land ownership or access was contemplated. The other 1975 law was the Land Reform for Agriculture Act. This limited redistribution of land to farmers by specifying only certain areas as eligible for land reform, some of which turned out to be barren or deforested lands. Further, it specified that the land used by farmers would not be given to them, but they would have to pay the Agricultural Land Reform Office on the basis of four different fees: an ownership fee, a land transfer fee, a cadastral (registration) fee, and a land improvement fee. Such fees were determined in ways that were prohibitive to the actual farmer: “Compensation on any parcel of land is *determined by the length of time under cultivation, the means with which it has been acquired*, soil fertility, type of farming and past land use” (emphasis added). In other words, the more valuable the land had become before its transfer to peasant ownership, the more the peasant would have to pay. They could also be assessed a fee higher than the market value if they applied for, or were

found living on, land after an arbitrary date fixed by the Land Reform Commission. This virtually guaranteed that the peasant would “choose” only the most barren, unirrigated land, land that is undesirable to the government or private developers. In some cases the government also offered a homesteading arrangement in which small farmers could take over land without paying, in return for clearing it. In northern Thailand this resulted in visible deforestation, thus making the land even less valuable and sustainable. In northeastern Thailand it resulted in local governments and landowners claiming that “their” land had been “deforested” by lower-class peasants, thus rendering the land’s value lower, and claiming both compensation and a reinstatement of “their” ownership. In other cases the land was offered for free because it was uncultivable; the smallholders who moved on to it soon found that they could not maintain food security by farming the dry, sandy soil of their newly acquired land. Further, in the modern system of wage-earning brought in by transnational employers, only a man, if anyone, would have enough currency or collateral to purchase the land he wished to continue cultivating, leaving the large number of female-headed households still below the poverty line.

In Viet Nam and China the state recently enacted laws to allow private ownership of land. But both are societies in which assets are customarily inherited only by sons, not by wives or daughters, with the same result as mentioned above for the large number of female-headed households. Further, in rural China an application to own land involves a lengthy and not entirely reliable process that allows pay-offs by potential developers, not the farmers who need to continue farming the land in the absence of policies or provisions for other types of employment. In Indonesia local land allocation was first enacted in 1999. But recent surveys have shown that the greatest disputes and the greatest corruption still occur over land. The ownership, use of, and access to land are still fraught with political, economic, and social consequences. It is over these valuations and uses of land that residents still feel that local as well as regional governments are the greatest targets of bribery.

Beyond the national level

First, in reality the “policies” we look at should not only be those decided and implemented at the national level. We have seen above how human security policy itself is not national or regional, but global and very local at the same time. In other words, the land upon which universalized policies to ameliorate human insecurity are thought to be valid is the entire world, but the physical areas in which they operate are communities in developing regions. At the opposite end of the spectrum

from globalization, once decentralization is implemented within a given nation it brings a new focus on regions and localities, but not always in ways that resolve human insecurity issues. In poor rural areas of Southeast Asia, a well-known paradigm of human insecurity is the cycle of landlessness, consequent lack of assets for basic human needs, and poverty, HIV, drugs, and conflict. Rural areas account for the greater part of the population, production, economy, and management of natural resources in mainland Southeast Asia, and have the largest human security problem when it does exist. The initiative to prioritize, and ideally to democratize, the exurban and rural areas politically is seen in the recent legislation in Thailand, Viet Nam, and Indonesia to decentralize government functions and decision-making to district and community levels, and allow local leaders to be locally elected rather than nominated and dispatched by the central government. Paradoxically, however, the disadvantages under which rural communities live have in many cases worsened due to the decentralization that was intended to give them greater power.

Second, much of government funding (though not the decision-making about funding) was also decentralized at the same time, and rural areas lack the revenue or managerial experience to implement the decisions. In some cases this has led to further poverty, loss of resources, and isolation from the mainstream of national decision-making, resource allocation, and implementation. But it is also because the decision to “return” governance to local areas, based on idealistic notions of a traditional community, did not include measures to preserve traditional community checks and balances along with the new, unfamiliar processes of fielding and electing local candidates, and mediation among competing interests by local actors. This has resulted in inter- and intra-household competition for scarce and often not clearly demarcated resources – especially land. These are disputes whose mediation in the past was undertaken verbally and in public by the village or district head, but this is not provided for under the current system of decentralized authority that relies, paradoxically, on national precedent and written legal title to resources.

Third, the economic measurements and surveys that underlie development policies and policy reform have yet to catch up with the human realities they should be representing. Specialists on development have commented that wherever “the focus is on the gross national product (GNP), on imports and exports, balance of payments, and efficiency and productivity”, the effects on economic resources and activities at the household level will be ignored (Kirmani and Munyakho, 1996: 164; Reid, 1994: 27). The dramatic increase in food insecurity in some areas of the world illustrates this fact. Food insecurity, which should be predictable and preventable, has in recent years re-emerged at unexpectedly

high levels even in countries that are food producers and exporters. A general example is the agricultural sector of the mainland Southeast Asian economy, which is an agricultural surplus and export economy. National governments in the region have, since the 1950s, pushed rural communities to undertake food production for export along with or even in place of household food subsistence. This export-oriented development policy can earn foreign currency for those in the businesses of food processing and procurement. But it also brings negative impacts on the agricultural community in terms of loss of productive land for household consumption. The land is lost to plantations and agribusinesses that promote monoculture rather than food, further contributing to occasional or chronic food insecurity in rural areas. Accompanying agricultural development of this kind is infrastructure development. This involves public construction of roads, buildings, and other facilities. Although these types of short-term projects can offer temporary employment and income to the rural poor, they also make unavailable, normally without the consent of those affected, huge tracts of land that had formerly been used for sustainable agricultural employment and food production. Policies for public works, notably dam construction and industrial parks, are implemented by governments in conjunction with domestic and foreign concerns and banks. The obligation to discuss such projects' desirability, feasibility, and impacts with those who will be directly affected is, however, absent from national policy in some countries and poorly implemented in others.

As has been discussed elsewhere, development policies have not been an unmixed blessing. The two categories of development above – export agriculture and construction of infrastructure – promised employment, cash income, and a higher standard of living to rural areas. Problems, however, arose along with the potential. The kinds of employment offered by construction, tenant farming on large plantations, and transportation, for example, are available to precisely the destitute and unskilled who have already lost most or all of their land. Yet, more significantly, these kinds of employment and projects exist precisely because land has been reallocated away from its rural users. Building construction and public works in Southeast Asia depend on the purchase of or right to use what was previously food-producing and income-producing land. Road construction depends on procuring rural land, and trucking and transportation depend on the roads and railways that have been built on such previously productive land. Further, because these kinds of employment also carry the greatest risks and harm, including exposure to toxic agricultural chemicals, injuries, and unhealthy work conditions, the debts which employees incur due to poor health or inability to continue working will result in their further loss of land.

From security to insecurity

From the examples above it can be seen that recent attempts to put in place modernizing and democratic policies within developing areas did not first consider ways to modify the burden the new policies would automatically place on the impoverished local district, its untrained, underpaid staff, and the local population, who may not be accustomed to open, frank, non-mercenary discussions with persons in positions of authority. Further, in these situations it is not simply the letter of the law itself that is the basis of limiting or denying access to land and food production or of hamstringing the local governments' budgetary resources. Nor is it law or national policy that has mandated the continuing discrepancies in land ownership and access to food and health. It is the presence of "policy"-making within local institutions or organizations that directly impact on the local population and thus on their access to human security. Modern policy-making at the level of the nation-state gives a set of opportunities as "grants" that require no reciprocity in the traditional sense. But they also have little impact on local areas precisely because there is no give and take, or what in purely economic terms would be a cost-benefit ratio. The policy-implementing institutions at the local level receive little or nothing more than they received before national reforms and policies for modernization were enacted.

The organizations that directly impact the lives of the rural poor are employers and employment recruiters; public educational institutions; the military; the police; public hospitals; the local transportation network (such as privately run local minibuses); and the various committees that are formed by the local government. Rural dwellers normally have no authority, confidence, or means to address a higher governing authority directly. They will, however, have daily encounters with one or more of these local organizations that can provide or deny human security at the individual level. For example, a person's future employability will not be decided by a national government but mainly by his/her schooling, the quality – or practicality – of which in turn is decided by his/her (or his/her parents') ability to pay, where "pay" means being able to put up collateral to obtain credit. Similarly, the status of a person's health will not be decided by a national policy but by the budgets and protocols of local hospitals, their possession or lack of up-to-date equipment and medicines, the knowledge possessed or not possessed by their staff, and again, the individual's ability to "pay" (public hospitals still require payments for medications, meals, and the like).

The physical security of a community may be provided or denied by the local military patrol, its corruptibility or otherwise, and its competitive or cooperative stance *vis-à-vis* the police force (which also has to do

with unmediated competition for political and economic resources between these two institutions themselves). Finally, in rural Asia, where employment is on an *ad hoc*, personal, or patronage basis, it is most of all the employer – whether the seasonally hiring landowner, the local factory or mill owner, or the “broker” who takes day labourers to public works construction sites – who will decide if, when, what, and how that person eats. There is also what Amartya Sen (1985) calls “dignity”: the ability to appear before one’s neighbours in a manner that does not invite disrespect. Though this last is certainly an intangible, it is a highly motivating force in community behaviour and access to resources, and it is based on fulfilment of more tangible needs: one’s educational attainments in comparison with nearby others, one’s social and economic function/role (through productive work and social networks), one’s social and family background, and the factor that enables and maximizes all of these – one’s property.

It is a hidden, but highly significant, phenomenon that the majority of the populations of developing countries are impacted by national policies in little more than the initial establishment or entry of such local institutions or organizations through government policy. Once established, such organizations make their own policies. These rules are implemented directly upon the local people who are in dire need of what the organizations provide, and who therefore, despite policies for democratic participation in local political arenas, are in a position *vis-à-vis* these institutions where they cannot easily negotiate. They are instead dependent on those who can offer them some degree of human security through employment, income, healthcare, or physical protection. This dependency is the core of human insecurity itself. It is manifested in the continuing poverty, food insecurity, and political and social disempowerment of rural Southeast Asia.

There is one common defining factor in this link between absolute poverty and powerlessness in Asia. That factor is, as we have seen, the unavailability of land. Without land, the moneyless, uneducated rural poor have no means of subsistence. Tenant farming on another’s land is subject to the variations of season, export market prices, and labour competition, of course. Rather than giving a means of gaining income and some amount of food, tenant farming often leaves the household with less than the minimum amount of food required for health. In a decade in which we have concentrated urgently on the links among food security, health, and catastrophic illness, we still need more empirical research on the fourth factor in this equation: starvation. Smith (1997) points out that rural families frequently undergo malnutrition and starvation periods to make insufficient income and food stretch within the household. The greatest known determinant for this severe threat to survival is access to

food-producing land. Not only is land the determinant for food, it is also the determinant for every other necessary resource and distribution of resources, including those within the household.

Further, it is the only thing reliably used as collateral, not only for economic bargaining but for social and political bargaining within the community. In all cases, for the rural poor, the “ability to negotiate” or “ability to pay” means the ability to borrow money. Under modernization, the combined household costs of sending children to school, accessing transportation, and accessing childbirth and healthcare facilities, all which have now become “basic needs”, are still well beyond the daily or monthly wage of rural earners. At the same time it is now unthinkable, to them or to their local government, that they would choose *not* to send their children to school, consult a physician for childbirth and infant care, obtain treatment for a serious illness, or use transportation to go to work or to the market. In the situation called “modernity”, the inhabitants of modernizing areas are no longer able to “choose” the older, outmoded ways of life – “education” being learning by experience, childbirth being attended by a village midwife, illnesses being treated by herbal medicines, work and marketplace being within walking distance. Modernity is hegemonic, allowing no choices other than those which its market forces determine. It thus comes as no surprise that the average villager incurs increasing debts throughout life. And as loans and debts increase, so does the need for collateral. The accepted collateral is one thing: their land, because it is immovable, and thus cannot be absconded with or subject to fakery as to its actual extent. They then gradually lose this collateral through the continued necessity of borrowing sums for survival throughout their lifetimes. In a region where the poor and middle class survive mainly through extensive loans, the absence of land – visible, tangible collateral – is a handicap from which recovery is often not possible. The tenanting of land, the only other option available to a large proportion of Asian rural poor, also subjects the labourer to the political and social power of the hiring landowner.

As we have seen, extreme poverty in Asia is found for a handful of interlinked reasons: landlessness, lack of access to education, and lack of access to regular employment. For the land-poor of Asia, not having enough land means not having enough income. Development policies have attempted to alleviate this kind of poverty, but in so doing have opened the door for new human insecurities. They provided temporary wage labour for those who lacked education, in the form of seasonal unskilled employment in export agriculture or public works construction, usually requiring mobility away from home. In mainland Southeast Asia, poor rural families send both men and women to work in construction and tenant farming. In purely economic terms, the result is at best the ab-

sence of one consumer/spender from the household, but at worst it is injury, disability, or exposure to epidemic disease, which further pauperizes the household. Some suggestions as to the interlinked reasons for this cycle emerge below.

Threats to human security at the local level are often “hidden”. Simply put, they are not the threats that conceptual frameworks and national policies for human security take into account. They are nevertheless the threats or actual insecurities that rural communities cope with, and succeed or fail at, and which form the basis of the human security of the whole nation. From 1999 to the present I have conducted surveys of pauperized households in rural Thailand that had little or no land, and that had also lost one or more working members to HIV. The surveys look at cost burdens of various kinds, including economic, time, and opportunity costs, all of which are, in local terms, losses in human security. Most, though not all, of the survivors who were trying to support the family were men and women with low education and earning potential; most had lost land due to astronomical healthcare expenses and were thus reduced to seeking day labour. From surveys with these focal points it is possible to grasp the economic situation of poor rural communities with a large number of human security issues. It is then possible to realize why certain human security threats, although well known to the local participants, may be “hidden” – that is, not taken into account – in development paradigms and policies. The loss of assets and resources previously provided by land, unmet costs at the household level, and their subsequent burden on the village community are seldom examined. If they were, they could be included in community and national development planning.

Saskia Sassen (2002), in her introduction to *Global Networks, Linked Cities*, describes “the intensifying circulation of goods, information, firms and workers” not just globally but within what she calls “strategic sites”, or grids around cities that now take on the economic activity which urban downtowns used to generate. Viewed on the smaller scale of developing rural areas in Asia, what Sassen perceives also applies to the provincial cities of Thailand, Laos, and Viet Nam. Economic globalization has not been a matter only of extent, but of greater speed of movements, transactions, and emerging consequences. The faster circulation (higher demand for and turnover) of workers within the newly building “grid” areas outside small cities like Lamphun, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Savan-nakhet, and Hué draws populations from farm villages. In northern Thailand the San Patong district and its satellite, Chom Thong, are about 30–60 minutes by car from the city of Chiang Mai along a provincial highway that has allowed the increasing economic activity of Chiang Mai to build larger exurban market centres and factories and take over

the exurban agricultural land. Beginning approximately 20 years ago, various development policies were implemented by the national and local governments and by government-private sector partnerships to promote such building of infrastructure and industry. Over that time these projects gradually deprived local users of land or degraded the land to the point where it became unproductive. A larger proportion than before of the present-day residents of the outlying areas are now land-poor and relying on irregular day labour, loans of money from neighbours, or small loans of food from local merchants to fulfil their most basic needs.

Human insecurity and policies for economic opportunity

For people and regions where land-based livelihoods have become non-viable, the short-term view has always held that more widespread and free education would prepare the workforce for non-agricultural jobs. Through policies for universal mandatory public education, Thailand and Viet Nam have achieved secondary education for a large proportion of the population and brought literacy in both countries to a rate of 90–95 per cent. But ironically, the availability of regular, living-wage contract employment that could utilize such an educated workforce is still low, especially in rural areas. Higher education does not always repay its costs, especially when employers seeking secondary-educated workers are still concentrated in the urban areas. Further, new household and land-related expenses that accompany cash economies, such as piped water, gas, electricity, and property taxes, require substantial outlay. These expenditures must come from the older adult household members who previously subsisted without a budget for these services and did not, in the past, acquire the education or skills to allow them enough earning potential. According to Knodel et al. (2002), this generation either take on additional low-paid work as well as additional debt, sell available property, or reduce their own daily consumption in order to make ends meet – all strategies that are logical, but that drag the individual and the household into further, irremediable, poverty and loss of land.

Other research has also emphasized the precarious nature of human security when economic development threatens traditional land-based subsistence. Researching in the rural San Patong district of Chiang Mai mentioned above, Thangphet (2001) confirmed that human insecurity is something of a vicious circle rather than a static condition or a progression. Traditional subsistence on the land in San Patong, made more difficult by the district's unusually low rainfall, began to require increasing inputs of human labour, machinery, and chemicals from the time the government started promoting cash crops in the 1960s. The HIV epidemic that swept San Patong from the early 1990s tipped this precarious bal-

ance into human insecurity. In an irony typical of development policies that were meant to raise levels of human security, the prosperity of neighbouring Chiang Mai caused San Patong's rural lowland farmers and tribal populations to sell or abandon their land. Many then migrated locally to the new jobs and markets that had sprung up, but still continue to find work only at wages below minimum or in day labour that is available only 15 days or so in a month. This is a prominent example of how efforts towards greater human security need to take the actual human consequences of economic opportunities, or the lack of them, into account (Sen, 1999).

Another feature of the modernizing economy in Southeast Asia is agribusiness. For countries that have long had the traditional skills and natural resources for high agricultural production, agriculture for the export market is a natural policy choice. Policies to promote agricultural exports are negotiated and decided on at the national level, with contracts and subcontracts going to domestic and foreign enterprises. Agribusiness necessitates plantation farming requiring large tracts of land and a substantial temporary workforce. Again, the lowest educated of the rural population, and those who do not own their own land, will be recruited for plantation jobs. The need for cash also encourages a large number of persons, usually women, to sell farm produce or hand-made items at local markets on a daily or weekly basis. In order to produce enough agricultural or hand-made items for sale, the worker must invest cash in materials, rental of land for agricultural production, and rental of market space. The cash must be obtained first through the sale of land, mobile labour, or through local high-interest loans from informal lenders based on land as collateral. All of these, as we have seen above, put the borrower in an extremely vulnerable position *vis-à-vis* human security.

Environment versus energy: The Mae Moh lignite mine

In rural developing areas the entrance of industry is relatively recent. Its introduction and expansion are implemented by local governments, as well as by local and transnational corporations, as the key to rural development. The relative newness and scarcity of manufacturing plants mean that they can be affordably located on tracts of rural land. Like agribusiness, industrialization depends on partnerships between private enterprise and national and local governments, and also deprives rural producers of large tracts of land. Further, it degrades the land and surrounding environment to the point where it becomes unusable and uninhabitable. Here, policies and policy-making agencies often clash. A salient example is the lignite (bituminous coal) strip-mine and factory in Mae Moh, outside the provincial capital of Lampang in rural northern

Thailand. Despite opposition from the Ministry of Health, due to the known capacity of exposed lignite and lignite processing to contaminate air, water, and soil, the national and regional governments came to an agreement with the state-run energy company, one private energy and mining company, and a construction company, and with financing from the Asian Development Bank, to mine lignite in open pits for use in increased electricity generation. This policy was meant both to modernize the local area and to provide jobs, as well as to provide more electric power for future industrial development. All these plans backfired, however, when a number of studies, and local residents themselves, confirmed that the air for several kilometres around the mines was unbreathable, and hospitals began treating a high number of pollution-related complaints. Hiring employees became extremely difficult and the local government was forced, for health reasons, to spend money to evacuate and relocate local residents for a radius of five kilometres in every direction – to forest land, which then became unusable for forestry. Further, due to the open pit and the refinery, the surrounding area has experienced warming and concurrent drought for a number of years, making subsistence impossible. The amount of land made unusable by the mine and power plant is thousands of hectares (135 square kilometres), without including the space used for the dumping of waste and the total area where air quality is affected.

This mine and plant were built mainly in order to lower the price of energy in rural Thailand, a praiseworthy goal. But, like other industrial parks of its kind, it was built on cheaply available rural land, and recruited unskilled industrial labour from the same rural populations who have become land-poor and welcome new employment opportunities. But one of the reasons that unskilled, cheap labour continues to be available is because the land that previously offered subsistence has been bought or degraded by the industries themselves.

The salient point here is that, among all the development policies, global, national, and local, that seek to ameliorate the lives and human security of the rural poor, there is still no policy for land lost to development. There are, in general, no policies or policy planning to serve as balances to earlier policies that have produced results opposite to those intended. The question remains: what do we do about human insecurity when it is human security policies themselves that have contributed to it?

What's "in" the land? The case of Khlong Dan

Another example involving a controversy over the proposed use of land can be seen in Khlong Dan, Thailand. This formerly productive land was designated as industrial and bid for by a company wishing to build facto-

ries. The main issue debated in Thailand between the Land Office, which has supported the use of the land by corporations to build factories, and the Environmental Office, which has questioned such use, is the existence or otherwise of “public waterways” on the land. This is a uniquely interesting conflict for one reason. Water resources are of course a major and universally acknowledged aspect of human security. But water resources may not be easily visible, or measurable, or conducive to public agreement on the volume of their use, especially when it concerns the potential or future population of the area. The potential for policy disputes over underground water resources that have not been fully measured, and over projections of population, is vast. Mainly, projections of future use competed between the introduction of factories versus the sustaining of rural land and the current population. Underground water resources, aquifers, and the projected need for irrigation canals if agriculture is to be sustained are not easily provable in empirical or bureaucratic terms. Indeed the Land Office, in supporting the manufacturer’s application for title deed to the land, used only aerial photographs of the land, which show only clearly visible rivers. This case, in which the dispute is over not only water but also the land which both supplies it and survives because of it, is similar to the debates on the contribution made or damage done by the construction of large-scale dams. What is at issue are three major points.

- The question of the necessity for policies for projections or pre-evaluations of the potential benefits and harm of large-scale changes to the living environment when land reallocation is at issue.
- The question of what, over large areas of land, is to be “discovered” or “mined” as a resource and designated for continued human use on a large scale, and who can legitimately seek and designate such resources and their use.
- The question of, or contestation over, the public or private “ownership” of the discovered resource; that is, the policy designation of which humans should be allowed access to it and which will supposedly have less “need” of access to it, and whose needs, and the political power to accompany them, will be traded away in the policy equation.

An unforeseen result: Greater poverty

Definitions of poverty, both relative and absolute, vary. But one of the main features of the transition to a developing economy is the obvious appearance of greater relative poverty in rural economies. Daily necessities are redefined to include not only the earlier home-produced or subsistence items, but also electricity, piped water, natural gas, transportation

and educational expenses, and purchased food and clothing. The need for cash earnings to pay for these features of a more modern life begins to replace the ability to subsist on self-produced goods. In the rural economy, however, the need for cash earnings is not matched by a primary economy that can provide regular employment in service and other sectors for the rural workforce. Cash earnings therefore still depend on sale of land, which then absolutely necessitates reliance on a very low-wage and irregular market for daily, or migrant, labour. Such low-end poverty is self-perpetuating, and often turns into a descent into an absolute poverty that mirrors the conditions of half a century ago. The surveys I undertake in the rural districts of northern Thailand on household and community poverty show results that compare well with the three-stage survey undertaken by the team from Mahidol National University's Institute for Population and Social Research (Knodel et al., 2002). In more than half of destitute households the adult generation and their parents, the elderly generation, had received only primary education. What does this have to do with land? There is little psychological incentive to undertake, or financial means to pay for, higher education in such households, thanks to their propertyless and incomeless situation, whereas there is a great deal of incentive to accept mobile hired jobs rather than finish secondary school. Landless poverty tends to reproduce itself, through the necessity of putting oneself in a risk environment, causing poverty to continue from one generation to the next.

The resulting risk confrontation consists of a choice between two more or less risky alternatives. In the case of the rural landless poor, the alternatives are unemployment and destitution versus an insecure workplace. The choice of the insecure workplace is the choice of an opportunity cost or deficit. The worker chooses the less immediate or less visible risk of potential work-related health problems, or the choice of selling land and losing a home, over the more immediate risk of unemployment and destitution.

The economic activity initiated by modernization and development policies thus itself presents a risk to human security at the community level. Unlike already modernized, developed economies that offer settled contract labour, economies in transition rely on less-educated, low-wage, mobile labourers from rural areas to build infrastructure and achieve higher agricultural production for export. What has not been clearly enough recognized to date, however, is that economic development also depends on being able to use these people's land on a permanent basis. This phenomenon affects not only rural but urban areas as well. Rapid building and the expansion of the service sector in modernizing urban areas draw an influx of temporary labour from rural areas. The urban area, meanwhile, undergoes the intensive shrinking of land resources

that have previously been used not for food security but for other types of security, such as income, health, and environmental safety. Yet these are the three types of security that the mobile labour force entering the urban area will not be able to access. In other words, the provision of policies to supplement or compensate for earlier policies is not part of the policy process.

Normally, studies of poverty policies target only certain populations and certain issues rather than clusters of related issues. They look at policy and policy reform as states of being, rather than as policy *processes and environments*. Such targeting has led to welfare policies that are inadequate in addressing the needs of the general population. Similar neglect of the interlinked features of any one kind of human insecurity to other insecurities will prove costly for the region in the future.

Interestingly, contrary to globalization's vaunted capacity to overcome barriers among the world's people, the "Special Issues" text box of the final report of the Commission on Human Security (2003) concluded that land-loss issues are arising in "an increasingly fragmented world". Why is the world becoming increasingly fragmented, under globalization? In the kind of globalization that produces unsustainable development, both work and its knowledge are sought and employed in a special, narrow sense. There are vast differences between globalization's demand for "knowledge work" and the other kinds of practical, sustaining knowledge and work that still, despite globalization, keep the major portion of Asia's people engaged with land. The different perceptions and valuations of this latter have been neglected in policies for the region.

The final report of the Commission on Human Security (*ibid.*: 72) also emphasized, in keeping with the views of Amartya Sen, that economic power is "the power to choose among opportunities". And as we have seen, in the case of the populations briefly described in this chapter it is not opportunities, costs, and risks, but rather simply deficits and losses among which many of them must choose. To answer this, first we must turn our attention away from the sky and down to the "ground", the productive soil of human lives. Alan Smith (1997) has pointed out that in the least-developed, resource-poorest areas, the only provider of human security is the individual himself or herself. It is thus not only the staff and directors of national and local institutions who can provide us with the necessary information on which policy decisions are based, but their constituents themselves, the local people who are impacted by, and must find their own ways to improve on, national policy. Local communities tell us about themselves at the real, daily, policy-impacted level. Communities where local people have sustaining resources combined with work, incomes, and social services – where, in fact, they even have the power to

become the official providers of these resource services – are communities that have impacted powerfully and successfully on national and international policies to recognize and sustain their own needs.

Notes

1. The Project on Global Environmental Change and Human Security's definition of human security designates threats to seven kinds of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political. This project is coordinated by the Canadian Global Change Program, the Netherlands Human Dimensions of Global Change Programme, and the International Human Dimensions of Global Change Programme.
2. The 1954 Law on Privately Owned Land "restricted" the amount of land that could come under private control, but did not restrict ownership or sale for financial gain by the traditional élites. The Land Consolidation for Agriculture Act of 1974 implied that government and private lands could be "redistributed" for use by the rural poor, but resulted in deforestation of lands and their subsequent uselessness or devaluation.

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6

Policy coordination beyond borders: Japan-China environmental policy practices in Shenyang and Chengdu, China

Wang Xue-ping and Yoshika Sekine

Introduction

Air pollution is one of the most prevalent and subtle threats to human security. People often pay very little or no attention to the deteriorating quality of air until it begins to harm human health, erode ecological systems, or generate unexpected impacts on global climate. Additionally, the fact that deteriorating air quality usually does not present itself visibly makes it that much more difficult for ordinary citizens to come to grips with this threat to secure life. Initial responsibility for understanding the nature of the problem generally, and the deterioration of air quality specifically, has to be borne by those who have scientific knowledge on the subject and the means to deal with it and its broader impact on the environment.

Deteriorating air quality presents especially serious problems in China, which has witnessed astonishing economic growth in the past few decades. These problems, however, affect both China and the world. In 1978 the People's Republic of China began to reform its centrally planned economy to a market economy under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The reforms have lifted tens of millions of people out of poverty and brought about rapid growth in an economy which now ranks among the largest in the world. The irony here is that the economic success, measured in terms of the enlarged national economy, has in a way disguised the serious drawbacks threatening more prosperous and secure lives. Over the same period the pressures for transformation of

the industrial sector, infrastructure to support economic growth, and motorization have multiplied hazardous emissions, which in turn have adversely affected environmental conditions, including air quality.

Emissions of the magnitude that China's vibrant economy has produced do not stay within its geographical borders. Evidence suggests the long-range and sustained transport of air pollutants beyond its borders (Sekine and Hashimoto, 1991; Hayasaki et al., 2007). Emissions of the "greenhouse gas" carbon dioxide by China are now the second highest in the world.

China's environmental problems are complex. The current situation shows the simultaneous appearance of both traditional types of pollution like acid rain, and a newer type known as "sick house syndrome", where previously unknown pollutants were discovered by the frontiers of environmental science. Notably, even though the central government has been constructing well-organized environmental laws, there is a difference in the ability to implement such policies between the wealthy east coast and the inland areas (Taketoshi, 2005). The coastal regions of eastern China have benefited from economic reforms since 1978, with the encouragement of foreign investment and technology for pollution control. The inland regions, however, have seriously lagged behind on both counts.

Given the complexity and magnitude of the threats to the environment originating in China, the government and non-governmental actors involved in dealing with them are many and diverse. Some have long histories of engaging in research and policy design. Others, in the process of research, have managed to cultivate close regional (i.e. cross-border) cooperation. The authors of this chapter belong to one such actor, the China Environmental Research Group at Keio University in Japan.

The origin of the group, made up of specialists from different academic disciplines, can be traced back to the pioneering work of a Keio scientist, Dr Yoshikazu Hashimoto, who since 1985 has developed the East Asia Atmospheric Observation Networks (known as JACK – Japan, China, and Korea). Dr Hashimoto's efforts to uncover the worsening cross-border atmospheric pollution were initially hampered by the lack of an appropriate government office in either Japan or China. But unflinchingly Hashimoto, with little government support, launched atmospheric observations first in Seoul, Korea (1986) and subsequently in various parts of China, including Beijing, Chengdu, Urumqi, and Baotou in Inner Mongolia. While his initial efforts welcomed local supporters such as Yang Zhi Min, then vice-director of the Environmental Protection Institute at Chengdu, Keio University also embraced his efforts and placed them in the broader framework of a research group (hereafter the Keio Group) in 1990. Hashimoto left the group to become the principal actor

coordinating research and policy activities dealing with the environmental issues of China. The Keio Group's efforts have involved not only scientists in the region but also government officials at different levels and citizens of various localities in China. The group has nurtured a broad alliance of experts and ordinary citizens, reminiscent of what Peter Haas (1992) called an "epistemic community", an alliance of scientists and experts of different backgrounds who helped forge the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.

This chapter highlights two projects that the Keio Group has been involved in on China's environmental issues. One is a 15-year project on air pollution control in Chengdu, Sichuan province. The other involves pioneering efforts with the application of the Clean Development Mechanism (one of the principal Kyoto Protocol innovations) through an afforestation project on the outskirts of Shenyang, Liaoning province (fig. 6.1). It should be noted that the group's efforts have never been confined to scientific research alone. Foremost, they aim at building up model cases



Figure 6.1 Location of Chengdu (Sichuan) and Shenyang (Liaoning), China

for improving the ability to implement pro-environment policies, especially among local people. After all, it is the individual citizen's life that is threatened by the degradation of the environment. Successful pro-environmental policies depend upon their empowerment.

China's two cases of environmental degradation: Air pollution in Chengdu

Chengdu city is a centre of politics, economy, and culture in the south-western part of China, located in the Sichuan Basin. The area of 12,300 km² had a population of 10.8 million in 2005, up from 9.3 million in 1991. While most residents in the basin are Han, there are also minorities such as Hui, Tibetans, Man, Meng, and Yi in the northern, western, and southern mountainous areas of the province. GDP per capita reached 19,627 yuan in 2005, compared to 13,020 yuan in 2000 and 7,345 yuan in 1995 (Bureau of Statistics of Sichuan, 1996: 22, 2001: 28, 2005: 35). However, there is still a large income gap between urban and agricultural workers.

Chengdu lies in a subtropical humid climate with more than 300 days a year of foggy weather with stagnant air, especially in winter. A local saying holds that "dogs bark when the sun appears in Sichuan". In addition, the recent economic growth has multiplied air pollutants, worsening the foggy atmosphere and unpleasant odours.

Major air pollutants in the early 1990s were sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and suspended particulate matter emitted from coal combustion effluents. Coal was used as a major energy source for household and industrial purposes: the low-quality coal, containing 0.5~5 per cent of sulphur, comprised 70 per cent of the energy consumption of Sichuan in 1993 (Yoshioka and Ikeda, 1995).

Air quality research and countermeasures against air pollution

The first step we needed to take was establishing the scientific profile of Chengdu's air pollution. Because a practical methodology of air pollution science had not yet been sufficiently established in Chengdu in the late 1980s, the Keio Group initially relied on the action of the East Asia Atmospheric Observation Networks (JACK), which had launched regional monitoring of air quality in 1985. The atmospheric concentration of various chemical components was determined by instrumental neutron activation analysis at an accuracy equivalent to the data of the National Air Surveillance Network, Japan (NASN). Atmospheric aerosol components at Chengdu were monitored from April 1990 to December 1992.

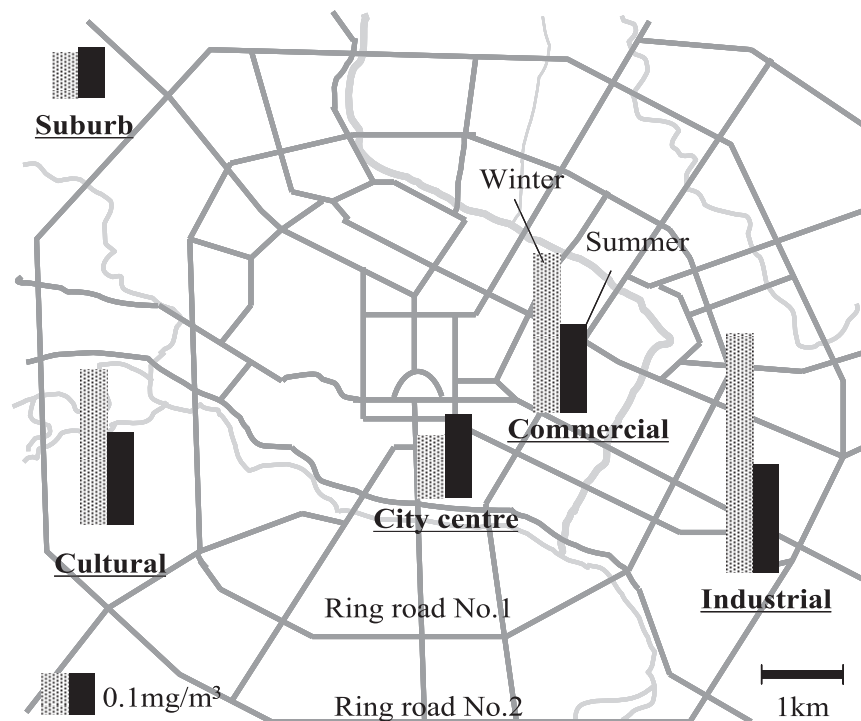


Figure 6.2 Comparison of TSP concentrations at city centre, cultural, commercial, industrial, and suburban districts in Chengdu in winter and summer, 1991

The status of the airborne particulate matter at that time was broken down, according to the information on its chemical components, as follows. The atmospheric concentration of total suspended particles (TSP) resulted in $352 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as a two-year annual average (much higher than China's permitted environmental standards: class I is $80 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, class II is $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, and class III is $300 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). The levels also tended to increase in winter. Fine particles whose aerodynamic diameter was below $1\sim 2 \mu\text{m}$ accounted for >50 per cent in the mass fraction of the TSP. The TSP contained significant levels of harmful heavy metals (Pb, Cd, As, and Se) and carcinogenic organic compounds such as benzo(a)pyrene. And the ranking of the polluted levels of the sampling sites was, in descending order: industrial district; city centre; cultural district; commercial district; and suburbs (fig. 6.2).

A source apportionment of the aerosol particles was also conducted using the chemical mass balance method (Sekine et al., 1995). The sum of the contributions from primary dust and secondary formed particles (sulphate and its counter-ions) that originated from coal combustion was

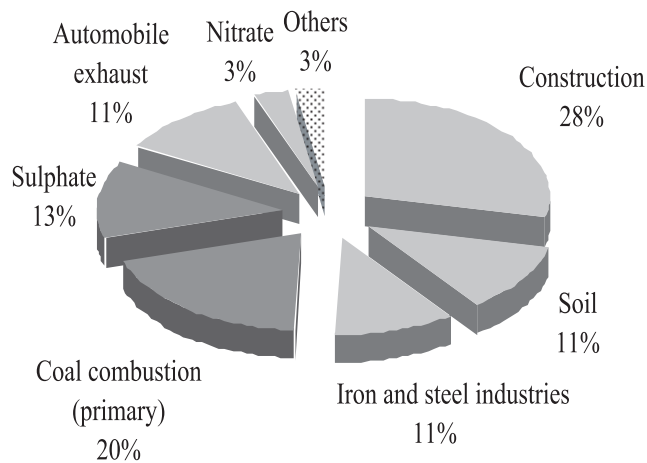


Figure 6.3 Contribution of emission source particles to atmospheric concentration of total suspended particles ($352 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ of two-year average from April 1990 to March 1992) at Chengdu city centre

estimated at approximately 40 per cent of the TSP concentration (fig. 6.3). Although this contribution was equivalent to that of particles derived from soil and dust raised in building construction, the coal-related particles should have been the focus of more attention because they are finer, and thus have a more severe impact on human health.

Alongside, medical surveys on the health status of children in Chengdu were conducted by distributing modified ATS-DLD78 questionnaires on respiratory symptoms to 7,795 children in elementary schools in 1991 and to 3,000 children in 1998 (Kagawa et al., 2001). Only children who had a residency history of three years or more were asked to be subjects for the questionnaires. The results showed a relatively higher prevalence of respiratory symptoms in the industrial and commercial districts compared to those in the suburbs. This order correlated to their air pollution levels in 1991, while the prevalence itself slightly decreased in 1998. On the other hand, comparing schoolchildren in China and Japan, the prevalence of persistent coughs and phlegm was much higher in Chengdu, while the prevalence of wheezing and asthma-like symptoms was higher in Japan. This probably reflected the air quality and lifestyle of children at that age.

A subsequent action the Keio Group took was a proposal for the local authority to implement stricter use of high-sulphur coal. The Chengdu municipal government, in turn, planned an air pollution control policy that took our results into account, and put these plans into action in 1994 (Yang, 2000). For example, the government imposed a ban on the

use of high-sulphur coal, and required the reduction of emissions of air pollutants from chimneys using coal in the industrial sectors, forcing industry to move away from the city if factories made no evident improvements.

Household consumption of energy did not escape our attention. The Keio Group estimated the contribution of not only industrial but also household sectors to the atmospheric concentrations of SO_2 in China by developing a grid simulation model (Hashimoto, Sekine, and Yasuoka, 2001, 2006). This was a conventional box model based on a mass balance theory with a transport submodel. The calculation of atmospheric SO_2 concentrations with $1.0^\circ \times 1.0^\circ$ latitude/longitude was carried out using the 1992 SO_2 emission inventory (as estimated by Nakajima et al., 2001). The estimated contribution from industrial production ranged from 8 to 85 per cent using the grid, with an average of 39.7 per cent, while the grid which included the Chengdu area was only 28.9 per cent. This meant that the SO_2 emitted from industrial sectors had less impact on the urban atmosphere than that from household uses. Therefore, countermeasures on household coal use were urgently required in the city of Chengdu.

These efforts led the local authority to take stronger measures: it authorized a ban on the use of coal for all purposes inside ring road No. 1 (see fig. 6.2) beginning in 1995, and additionally inside ring road No. 2 from 2001. The newly constructed ring road No. 3 is now the frontier of the reach of this policy. Instead of coal, natural gas was distributed for household energy in Chengdu city, because the Sichuan Basin has natural gas fields with verified reserves of 718.7 billion m^3 .

The Keio Group's action was not limited to these reactive measures only. We developed and offered two kinds of clean air technology to meet the need for preserving air quality. One was automatically controlled cooking stoves for Chinese restaurants, which enable them to use both natural gas and petroleum. The pilot stove was first developed in 1995 by technology transfer of Japanese burners, and then improved in terms of combustion efficiency, compact design, and reduction of noise and air pollutants. The stove is now patented and distributed as an environmentally friendly cooker not only in Chengdu but also in Chongqing, Shenzhen, and other inland provinces (Yang and Aoki, 2004).

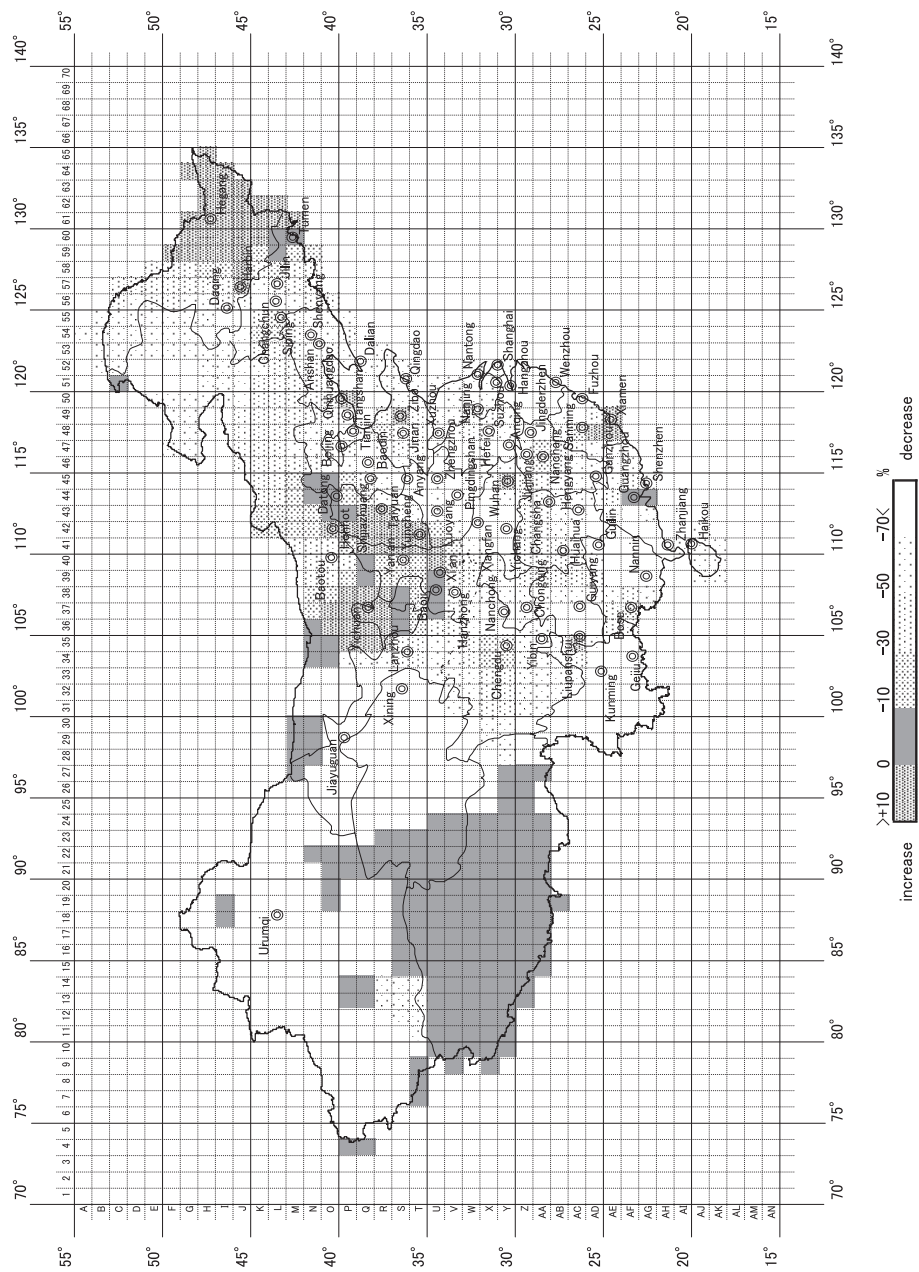
The other clean air technology is the Biobriquette. This is a small coal briquette made of coal powder, biomass (agricultural waste), and a desulphurization agent (slaked lime, $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$). Desulphurization is a key technology for reduction of SO_2 emissions into the air when coal is used. For this reason, the Keio Group conducted pilot studies on how to produce the Biobriquette in both Chengdu and Shenyang from 1997 (see Yamada, 2001). As a result, the high-performance Biobriquette, showing a 70 per cent desulphurization rate, was successfully manufactured in the

test factories. We also estimated the potential benefits of replacing coal with Biobriquettes in terms of reducing the atmospheric SO₂ concentration, and its relation to both the health impact and the economy of China, based on grid model simulation. The Biobriquette was welcomed in Shenyang as a cost-effective desulphurization method. Ironically, it was not authorized for use in the city of Chengdu in the end because the briquette was known to contain one of the banned fuels, coal. Even though the local government at first was positive towards this new fuel, the use of natural gas and oil had been given priority in the city. Currently the Biobriquette project is pending in Chengdu. However, we believe this type of technology will be necessary in suburban or rural areas where coal is still an important energy source.

The net result of all these efforts is by no means negligible. In 2000 the Keio Group predicted a change in SO₂ concentration from 1992 to 2005, using the grid simulation model with $1.0^{\circ} \times 1.0^{\circ}$ resolution, coupled with an empirically derived change rate of SO₂ concentrations as taken from the *China Environmental Yearbook* during the 1990s. Illustrated in figure 6.4, SO₂ concentrations were predicted to decrease in most provinces by an average of 40 per cent as result of the policy practices for coal.

Throughout the research years there were unexpected encounters with a new type of air pollution, which can be traced to the changing lifestyle of residents. In January 2000 China Western Development, also known as the Great Western Development Strategy, was adopted by the central government to boost the underdeveloped regions of China, including Sichuan province. The main components of this strategy consisted of the development of infrastructure, incentives for foreign investment, promotion of education, the retention of talent that had been flowing to wealthier provinces, and the protection of ecosystems. As a result, the combined GDP of these regions in 2005 was double that of 2000. During this period of economic growth the lifestyle of the people has dramatically changed. Especially noteworthy was the increased use of synthetic chemical products. Such chemical products provide amenity in daily lives, and seemingly create safer and more comfortable living environments when they are properly used. The cost for this amenity is, however, high.

A typical example is that housing structures and building materials have greatly changed over recent years in China. Artificial building materials such as plywood, particleboards, vinyl wallpaper, and oil-based paint are used for interior finishing in houses that are constructed to be airtight. In the early 1990s the major indoor air pollutants in Chengdu were coal combustion effluents, such as SO₂, NO_x, CO, and dust (Ro, 1995). More recently, volatile chemicals used in the building and furnishing materials have caused health disorders, or the so-called "sick building syndrome". For this reason we conducted field surveys on indoor air quality



at Chengdu in November 2001, using passive samplers for the measurement of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and formaldehyde (Ro et al., 2003). The results are summarized as follows: concentrations of VOCs used as solvents for paint, such as toluene, xylene, and ethylbenzene, were relatively higher in newly built houses; and higher concentrations of formaldehyde ($0.12 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) were found in houses where many pieces of furniture were arranged at a high density in each room. During our survey we witnessed a miserable resident who had just left his new house to escape exposure to these chemicals. Though subtle, the message from this encounter with a new type of air pollution is clear: environmental policy needs to embrace not only “what chemicals to regulate” but also “how to manage chemicals”, especially when they appear to bring daily benefits.

Finally, there is one important development which can serve as a powerful countermeasure against environmental degradation – education of the next generation. Parallel to the strenuous scientific endeavours over the years, the Keio Group launched educational campaigns targeted at Chengdu children. With our support, the Chengdu Environmental Bureau and the Chengdu Educational Bureau hosted a children’s environmental art exhibition in 1997. The number of drawings submitted by elementary school children reached 50,000, exceeding expectations. The art works mostly consisted of water paintings, but there are also Chinese traditional ink paintings and wood engravings, showing the beautiful scenery of the city of Chengdu, the giant panda as a symbol of biodiversity, the clean-up campaign in the school and city, and so on. These pieces were published in a booklet entitled “I Love the Environment, I Love My Hometown” by the Chengdu municipal government when Chengdu was selected as host city of the World Earth Day by the United Nations in 2002. This book was delivered to participants and schools as a special gift at the World Earth Day ceremony. Subsequently, in 1998, we also collected environmental essays written by junior high school students of the Chinese Qian minority of Mao county, Sichuan. The essays were published in both Chinese and Japanese languages. Scientific investigations may lead to rigorous debates before any action can be taken, and policy measures may be hampered by partisan interests where environmental issues are concerned. By contrast, the development of an environment-conscious generation may well be among the surest paths towards arresting further degradation of the environment.

Previous page: Figure 6.4 Predicted rate of change (%) in atmospheric SO_2 concentration in China from 1992 to 2005, calculated by the grid simulation model with $1.0^\circ \times 1.0^\circ$ resolution

Source: Figure provided by Dr Shinichiro Hashimoto.

China's two cases of environmental degradation: An afforestation project in Shenyang

Among the various environmental problems, "global warming" is one that is unfettered by the presence of national borders. The adverse impact of global warming is ubiquitous, increasing the chances of highly infectious diseases such as malaria, erosion of ecosystems, and destabilization of climate change. Nevertheless, the origins of global warming are always located within national borders, be they consumption of fossil fuels or uncontrolled deforestation. It is for these reasons that any multi-lateral efforts at controlling global warming have to presume the close co-operation of a country where the origins of the problem are identified.

The threat that global warming poses is exemplified by the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The much-prolonged negotiations for the protocol testify to the fact that an international consensus about the threat of global warming cannot alone overcome the conflicting interests of participating countries.

The obligations for the individual signing countries, accordingly, vary from one country to another. More importantly, the protocol allows a great deal of flexibility in the manner that the signees can reduce emissions levels, such as "emissions trading" and the "Clean Development Mechanism", among others. In other words, the protocol, through its built-in flexibility known as the Kyoto mechanisms, does not leave the individual participating countries alone to tackle the otherwise overpowering task of reducing the vast amount of CO₂ emissions.

Japan ratified the protocol in 2002, and is now obliged to reduce its emissions of the so-called greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 6 per cent from the 1990 level within the period between 2008 and 2012. Within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol, Japan is allowed to achieve the target reduction of GHGs not only by purely domestic efforts. Especially through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Japan can offer green technology, funds, and other kinds of support to developing countries to reduce GHGs or amplify the absorbed quantity of CO₂ in these countries, and part of the reduction can be allotted as a credit to Japan (Wake and Hayami, 2004: 23–25).

The use of the CDM scheme with China was a much-needed policy alternative for Japan, which would have an insurmountable task in reducing GHGs through domestic efforts alone. The basic shift of China from a passive to a more positive acceptance of the Kyoto Protocol following the Johannesburg World Summit of 2002 paved the way for cooperation within the Kyoto Protocol framework (*ibid.*: 110–115). Additionally, co-operation with China through the CDM, in Japan's view, may lead to overcoming the long-standing problems of air pollution, and facilitate

the prevention of the long-range transport of air pollutants beyond China's borders.

As these developments and considerations gathered momentum of their own, the Keio Group, then headed by the late Dr Tomoyuki Kojima, in 1999 launched an afforestation CDM experiment in Kangping prefecture, Shenyang, Liaoning province, China. The following section introduces the implementation process of the afforestation CDM experiment in Kangping, the contents of the negotiations between the two governments, and the possibilities for policy coordination between the Japanese and Chinese governments to solve the transboundary air pollution problem through the CDM structure (ibid.: 23–36).

The project is an experiment undertaken to prove the usefulness of the CDM. It also uncovered the importance of policy coordination where environmental problems are concerned. The entire process of preliminary research, actual implementation, and verification of the results of the experiment was immensely complex and never free of misunderstandings, precisely because it involved such diverse actors as scientists, local government officials, and civilian engineers. As such, the story of this project may be representative of any similar effort to promote secure and safe life.

Afforestation in Kangping prefecture, Shenyang

The Keio Group and the Chinese Shenyang Forestry Bureau agreed on Kangping prefecture as the site for the afforestation CDM experiment for the following reasons. First, “yellow sand” in China has been a serious problem, and it is advancing from Inner Mongolia to Liaoning province in China. Kangping prefecture, at the boundary of Liaoning and Inner Mongolia, was strategically an obvious choice for planting trees as a barrier to the advancing sand. Economic considerations also played a determining role. The continued advance of the desert from Inner Mongolia has turned Kangping into one of the poorer prefectures in the province, as it has perpetuated yearly poor crop harvests. The hope that installing tree sand-barriers would lead to higher agricultural yield influenced the choice of the prefecture. Finally and most importantly, the area has only a few kinds of plants and we felt it would be relatively easier to isolate and identify the effects of the newly planted trees, and hence easier also to satisfy the requirements for the application to undertake an afforestation CDM project (Kojima, 2000: 259–267).

From 1999 to 2006 the Keio Group and the Shenyang Forestry Bureau cooperated and afforested the area seven times. The details are summarized in table 6.1. The total area of afforestation was 529.1 hectares, and 442,815 poplar trees in total were planted.

Table 6.1 Process of afforestation experiment in Shenyang, Kangping prefecture, 1999–2006

	Time of afforestation	Age of saplings (years)	Number of trees	Type of tree	Area (ha)
1	April 1999	2	75,000	Zhelinpopla No. 4	80.0
2	April 2000	2	63,000	Zhelinpopla No. 4	66.7
3	April 2002	2	189,000	Zhelinpopla No. 4	240.0
4	April 2003	1	45,000	Holland popla	50.0
5	April 2004	2	52,000	Baichengpopla No. 4	70.0
6	April 2005	1	12,936	Zhelinpopla No. 4	15.4
7	April 2006	1	5,879	Zhelinpopla No. 4	7.0

Note: These data are based on the investigation by Keio University, and are slightly different from the data offered by Shenyang.

Towards a sustainable project: An afforestation CDM

Planting trees on such an immense scale is, in and of itself, a considerable achievement in protecting the environment. However, in order for such efforts to become sustainable, at least two conditions must be fulfilled. One is evidence of the actual, and positive, effect of the afforestation as measured in terms of reduced CO₂. The other is the arrangement or framework where the effort of afforestation can be duly recognized in a manner such that the participating parties do not only carry the costs but also reap the gains in a fair sharing of the credit for reduced CO₂. The afforestation CDM scheme provides such a framework. The former is more scientific in nature and the latter more political.

Measuring the achievement

Several rounds of scientific investigations between 2002 and 2005 were needed to establish and estimate the actual outcome of our afforestation efforts. The first such investigation was made by means of a trunk analysis in 2002 and 2003, directed by Dr Hitoshi Hayami at Keio University Economic Observatory and Dr Takao Fujimori of the Japan Forest Technology Association. The analysis proceeded along the following steps: divide the planted area for each year into 10 m² blocks; classify the blocks according to “good”, “average”, and “bad” growth records in order to cut sample trees for analysis; measure the raw and dry weights of roots, branches, and leaves collected; and measure the raw and dry weights of trunks which are cut out at every metre to make 2–3 cm thick discs (fig. 6.5). Using this method, we analysed 15 trees in 2002 and 60 in

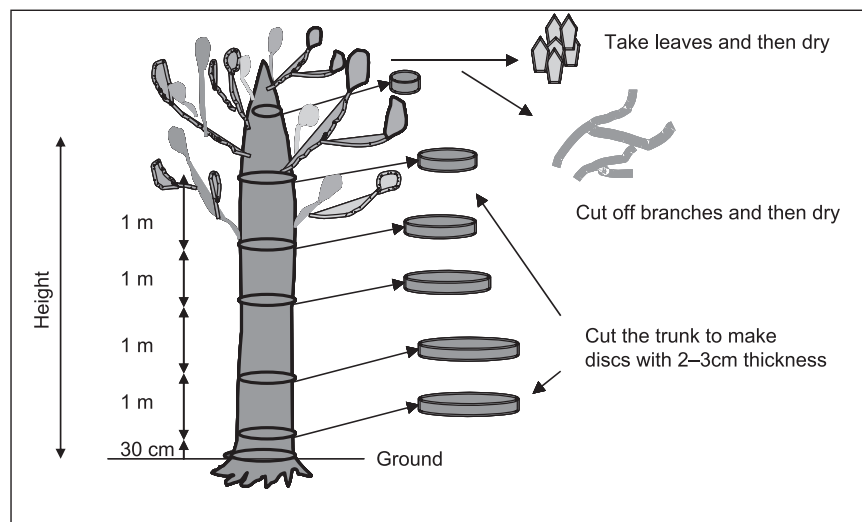


Figure 6.5 Trunk analysis according to Takao Fujimori of the Japan Forest Technology Association

2003. In the years 2004 and 2005 we investigated 600–700 trees using a similar method, except that the measurement was applied to the height and diameter at a chest-high point without cutting down the trees. Moreover, from 2004 all the investigated trees were numbered, and the measurement was applied to the same labelled trees. Based on these rounds of investigations, the results were calculated: one hectare of poplars was able to absorb 200 tonnes of CO₂ during 20 years of growth (Wake and Hayami, 2004: 37–57).

Sharing the cost and sharing the credit: Before CDM status

The achievement in this increased ability to absorb CO₂ is indeed considerable for efforts limited to a small area of northern China. Its contribution to the fight against the global warming, though still small in scale, is not negligible either. However, the achievement as supported by the scientific evidence alone does not secure the sustainability of the efforts; they need to be embraced within a framework where the costs and gains are duly recognized and shared by all participating parties.

In order for our efforts to be placed in such a framework – that is, recognition as a CDM case – there were steps we could not ignore or bypass. Preparation of a PDD (project design document) is one such step. As this step requires documentation of the local economic and other conditions

at the site of afforestation, the efforts were no longer limited to the scientific community alone. The Shenyang Forestry Bureau came on board in the summer of 2005. Only after the bureau's cooperation could Keio University via the group start preparing the PDDs for afforestation in China. The ensuing process has been haphazard, as it has constantly uncovered misunderstandings and misperceptions.

The group began in 2005 formal negotiations with two central offices in China dealing with a CDM scheme: the National Development and Reform Commission of China's Ministry of Science and Technology, and the State Forestry Administration, which is in charge of the afforestation CDM. Two meetings played a key role in pushing the whole process. On 27 June 2005 Keio University and Shenyang Forestry Bureau jointly held a workshop in Beijing, where they invited persons in charge from the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the State Forestry Administration, and the Japanese Embassy in China to participate. The meeting was the first official introduction to the Chinese government of the CDM efforts in Shenyang. On 28 October of the same year they held a symposium at the Mita campus of Keio University, to which officials from the Forestry Agency in charge of the Japan afforestation CDM, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), China's National Development and Reform Commission, the State Forestry Administration, and Shenyang City Forestry Bureau were invited.

Pending problems

These occasions, while helping to forge a closer relationship between the two sides, also uncovered several key hurdles that we needed to overcome in order for our past efforts to gain a firmer footing.

One of these problems is the proper recognition and appreciation of Keio's funding, about ¥30 million, paid to Shenyang Forestry Bureau between 1999 and 2006 for what amounted to an afforestation CDM experiment in Kangping prefecture. However, from 1997 to 2005 the rules for the CDM were only gradually clarified and made explicit by the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the CDM Executive Board. In addition, China did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol until 2005. Following that, it too devised specific rules for CDM applications and operations. In other words, there was no firm ground for an understanding that the amount of CO₂ absorbed by the trees planted using the Keio fund would belong to Keio University.

Especially at issue is China's position that all the CERs (certified emission reductions) from a CDM project carried out in China would belong to the Chinese executants, and that a foreign investor has priority in pur-

chasing CERs from China. A CER, briefly, is the environmental credit based on the CDM, one of the Kyoto mechanisms along with emissions trading and others adopted by the Kyoto Protocol. A CER is issued after registering with the CDM Council as a GHG emission reduction project and after the amount of emission reduction has been inspected. According to this position, Keio would have to pay twice: once for the pre-CDM investment which enabled Shenyang to plant hundreds of thousands of poplar trees, and another for purchasing CERs. Some Keio members argued that paying twice would be unfair and that efforts at gaining CDM status should be suspended. A compromise position was offered by China's National Development and Reform Commission: the pre-CDM investment for afforestation and other accompanying expenses can be recognized as payment for CERs; and, at the same time, not all the CERs from the invested trees belong to the investor and only the value of CERs equal to the invested fund can be recognized as belonging to the initial investor.

The disagreement and eventual compromise exhibited in the handling of Keio's "initial investment" exemplify other cases of difficulties. One such case, raised at the workshop in June 2005 by China, was the concern with whether an educational institution like Keio University could be a CER purchaser. The main objection was the doubt over the ability of Keio as an educational institution to raise sufficient funds in a sustainable manner. China advised that, if possible, it would be better to consign the purchasing of CERs to a corporation. In response, Keio University considered using Keio Academic Enterprise Co. Ltd as a possible CER buyer in substitution. However, due to contract problems, Keio Academic Enterprise Co. expressed doubts concerning its participation in such projects. After a round of exchanges, Keio won agreement from China. Regarding the previous funding, since the investment had already been made there was no problem of financial security, and therefore the university was qualified to apply as the CER buyer. Following this response, Keio decided to apply as Keio University.

The problem of status as a CDM executant is not only limited to Keio University. Shenyang Forestry Bureau, which has been instrumental in the whole project since 1999, may infringe China's position that a government office cannot be a CDM executant. A compromise was suggested by the Shenyang side: first, the farmers who had participated in the project were allowed to form an association; and then the city's Social Welfare Bureau permitted the association to become a CDM executant. The problem was that the association was represented by Shenyang Forestry Bureau officials, inviting an objection by the National Development and Reform Commission, which claimed the association be disqualified due to its close relationship with the government. An alternative was suggested

by Professor Xiao-quan Zhang from the Chinese Academy of Forestry, with whom the Keio Group has had a close working relationship since 2005. He had been instrumental in many of afforestation CDMs in China, including one with the World Bank in Guangxi province. His alternative, straight from the Guangxi precedent, was to use a local tree farm in Kangping as an executant. This role went to a state-run *zhang-jia-yao* tree farm. Because the person in charge of the tree farm lacked knowledge of the CDM, however, the negotiating agent on the Chinese side still remained the Shenyang Forestry Bureau.

A third problem following the settlement of the CER purchaser and CDM executant issues was determining the purchase price for CERs. The initial barriers to agreement were high. The Chinese government did not accept a project with a price lower than \$5 per tonne of CO₂. But because the price in the international market was around \$13 for a tonne of CO₂, Shenyang sustained the position that \$5 was too low. To counter these positions, Keio, whose initial offer was \$5, needed to prepare a careful argument. The international price of \$13 is a value appropriate only to the energy field, and is not applicable to the current project; in fact, even the price of \$5 is too high in the afforestation field.

Here, again, Professor Zhang played an instrumental role, citing the World Bank Guangxi afforestation project. The Guangxi project, an experiment accepted by the Chinese government under special permission, set the selling price at \$4.35 per tonne of CO₂, the highest among all afforestation CDMs under World Bank auspices. In the end, Shenyang yielded to Keio's offer of \$5 per tonne.

With all these basic agreements in place, the determination of the reduced CO₂ presented another problem. Based on the data of the investigations from 2002 to 2005, Keio University calculated that during the 20 years of the afforestation period the amount of absorbed CO₂ would be 200 tonnes per hectare. This estimate, however, had one important condition: the proper growth of all planted trees. Given this condition, the Keio side calculated that CO₂ absorption would be around 100 tonnes per hectare in the 20 years. On average, every hectare of trees would absorb 5 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

Shenyang strongly opposed this estimate, for, combined with a price of \$5 per tonne, it would bring the profit down too far. Professor Xiao-quan Zhang this time agreed with Shenyang. He presented data from the Guangxi project as an example, and offered an estimate of 15 tonnes of CO₂ absorbed per hectare every year. Keio's response was that since the geographical conditions of Guangxi were greatly different from Shenyang, the estimate of CO₂ of even 5 tonnes was generous. The impasse led all parties to agree on a range between 5 and 10 tonnes, and wait for further investigation to be conducted by Professor Zhang.

A final problem is the timing of the Shenyang project, which began *before* some of the basic rules for afforestation CDMs were made. On the one hand, there was a problem of how much of Keio's total efforts counted as a legitimate CDM. Between 1999 and 2006 Keio University expended close to ¥30 million to fund the afforestation and the fees for investigating the CO₂ absorption amount and the accompanying social conditions in the site of afforestation. Although this project started with a vision of being a CDM, there was no formal clause in any funding contract stating that the project was to become a CDM case. The first funding contract with a specific CDM clause did not become effective until the summer of 2002, which makes only the afforestation *after* 2003 legitimately characterized as CDM-related afforestation. Consequently, the amount of funds usable for the CDM project turned out to be ¥13.5 million. Keio University as an educational institution had to insist that, since it applied as a university, the entire investment should be used as CER purchasing funds, and if the amount of CERs exceeds the investment, there will be no additional purchase on Keio's part.

Shenyang was very dissatisfied with this insistence. It thought there would be more purchasing funds beyond what it had accepted already. This disagreement deepened the concerns of all participants in the project from its early phase, as it might undermine the basis for further pro-environment actions. A compromise was offered by Professor Xiao-quan Zhang and agreed by both sides, which was to apply for an afforestation CDM that would include the amount over ¥13.5 million invested by Keio University after 2003. Keio University and the *zhang-jia-yao* tree farm could then sign a contract to cover only the purchasing amount of ¥13.5 million, and Shenyang could sell what is left of the CERs to other corporations or governments.

Shifting and expanding the site of the afforestation presented a problem of a similar nature. The sites where Keio University planted the poplars from 2003 to 2006 were chosen by the Shenyang Forestry Bureau and were scattered around many places. At the time, many rules and regulations of the implementation method for afforestation CDMs had not been made fully clear. Moreover, most of the sites were state properties. As the preparation of the PPD proceeded, it became clear that the right to use the land had to be transferred to the farmers from the Chinese government.

Then all the parties recognized a problem. When the DOE (designated operational entity) examines an afforestation CDM application, the DOE has to visit each farmer and confirm each contract situation as well as the distribution of the resulting profit. Furthermore, not only every contract between the tree farm and farmers must be signed again, but also the structure of the afforestation CDM must be explained to every farmer

again. Given this, and the fact that the process could involve over 200 farmers, there was a fear that all sorts of complications, difficulties, and misunderstandings might paralyse the application process.

Opinions were exchanged and debates ensued. The responsibility for explanation would rest with one key person, Dr Jinlong Liu, director of the Forestry Bureau of Kangping prefecture, who thus offered a proposal: to look for new sites with fewer farmers (i.e. many large farm owners) to plant trees, with conditions and tree species similar to the 2003–2006 afforestation sites. Behind the proposal was the calculation that the reduced number of local farmers might reduce the complications.

Both the Keio Group and Professor Xiao-quan Zhang quickly opposed the proposal. First, the objection by Keio University was obvious. It had kept all the records of the previous afforestation, and all the field investigations since the earlier phase of the project. If the sites were to change, it would be questionable whether the past investigation results would still be valid. Furthermore, there was also a strong sentiment that the scientific findings could not be compromised by political or even technical complications. Professor Zhang was concerned about another issue. The Chinese government had stipulated that when an afforestation CDM was implemented, the profit should be shared with the local and small-scale farmers as much as possible. Director Liu's emphasis upon large-scale farmers would go directly against this stipulation.

Despite all these objections, Shenyang stated it would not change its position concerning the change to areas where there were large-scale farmers. Its response to Professor Zhang's objection was that profit-sharing with small farmers would be possible through the contracts between the large-scale and small farmers to be stipulated in local government documents, since the lands of the large-scale farmers are often leased from small farmers. (As of this writing, we have not agreed on this issue yet, and both Keio University and Professor Zhang continue to examine Shenyang's position.)

Along with these developments, there is one activity of the Keio Group whose effects cannot be easily erased. Keio University conducted environmental education for students through these afforestation activities. Firstly, students from China and Japan, as well as local citizens, were invited to participate in the afforestation in Shenyang. It was hoped, as it was in Chengdu, that they could see the importance of environmental protection by participating in these activities directly. The efforts have been reinforced by another programme since 2002, which is an annual observation tour by Japanese students and their Chinese counterparts to visit Shenyang afforestation project from Keio University.

One point emerges from the above descriptions: consensus on the need for a pro-environmental policy alone cannot generate policy actions

agreeable to all participating parties. Another is that any attempt at devising a sustainable framework for pro-environment policies, such as the CDM scheme offered by the Kyoto Protocol, is immensely time-consuming, as it has to solicit support from a large number of actors of various interests, given the magnitude of actual and needed actions. Nonetheless, the point that all participating parties could agree is simple – regardless of the difficulties in orchestrating policy coordination and the time consumed in managing environmental degradation, the issue is serious enough to keep working at it.

Conclusion

Since air pollution in China now and in the future will have ever-greater impacts on a regional and global basis, we have to share a common understanding of the fundamental value of air quality for human security beyond borders, races, and generations. Such an understanding, however, will require a long time for fulfilment. Thus education is very important in developing a common understanding about the environment. The authors are now planning to make “live” teaching materials based on the two research projects highlighted in this chapter. This will include a students’ programme in interdisciplinary sciences and practices for policy-making in inland China.

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7

ASEAN migrant workers: From poverty to human-security-based competitiveness

Patcharawalai Wongboonsin

Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide an answer to a key question in the investigation of marginalization in the twenty-first century: how to turn migration into a win-win situation, with contributions to the human security of both sending and receiving countries beyond poverty reduction and what there might have been without migration?

The chapter is divided into five parts, starting with conceptual frameworks to identify ASEAN migration in the international context and its relation to human security. Next, the patterns of transnational migration in ASEAN and major characteristics of ASEAN migrant workers are identified, with major routes of migration. This is followed by a section on “From poverty to human insecurity” to highlight the impact of migration in the region, touching upon recent migration management at the unilateral, bilateral, and regional levels, with a focus on their contribution and shortcomings. Before the concluding remarks, recommendations and strategies are suggested for regional cooperation in line with a human security approach, in order to lift migrant workers out of poverty and towards competitiveness by the time ASEAN turns into the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015.

Conceptual frameworks and justification

Migration is a rising phenomenon and one of the most enduring features of human experience. It covers population movements both within and across borders. The latter is wide ranging, with an increase in intensity from 2.5 per cent of the world population in 1960 to 3.0 per cent in 2005, reaching 191 million. Half of those migrants are workers (United Nations, 2007: 1). The number of migrants in the world is expected to reach 230 million by 2050 (United Nations, 2002: 9–16).

Lately, one can see changing patterns in the magnitude, structure, and complexity of transnational migration (United Nations, 1998: 67–95). Factors affecting the flows are varied. The “laws of migration”, the earliest theory of migration, maintain that economic factors are usually the main stimulus for migration (Ravenstein, 1885). At the macro level, the neoclassical economic theory of equilibrium sees migration as being caused by push factors in the home country and pull factors in the receiving countries (Lee, 1966). Research on migration maintains that poverty is a significant push factor, while wage differentials can be a major source of attraction (United Nations Development Programme, 2006; Stalker, 2000). Workers migrate from low-wage to high-wage countries, particularly where they expect the highest net gain. According to these views, rural areas provide an unlimited supply of migrant workers (Lewis, 1954; Harris and Todaro, 1970).

The dual-labour-market theory argues that the transnational mobility of economically driven migrants results from the structural demand or the segmented labour market in the destination country. According to Piore (1979), highly industrialized countries have two sectors in the labour market. On the one hand there is the primary sector, which produces goods and provides secure jobs with high pay and good working conditions. On the other hand, the secondary sector recruits foreign workers to fill unstable jobs with low pay, limited benefits, and the kinds of hazardous working conditions which are refused by local people. This dual-labour-market theory also sees the role of labour contractors as being that of facilitating the flow of new migrant workers. Among assumptions about migration in the neoclassical economic theory, a major one is that migration is a free choice for individuals, based on their assessment of the opportunities offered by different countries in a migration market (Borjas, 1989, 1990).

The push-pull theory also recognizes non-economic factors, particularly of the push type, to explain migration within and across countries. Non-economic push factors include persecution, oppression, ethnic-based political conflicts, and civil war. Such political motives are traditionally attributed to the refugee type of forced migration flows. Meanwhile,

economic-oriented migration, which is more of a voluntary type of flow, may also be considered to have political reasons behind it. This is particularly true for the perspective that sees a combination or intermingling between “freedom from want and freedom from fear” as an important motive for persons to move to places offering both more peace and prospects for a better income. “Freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” represent two major schools of thought for implementing a human security agenda (United Nations Development Programme, 1994).

Besides push and pull factors, Lee (1966) suggests the role of “intervening factors” which may either facilitate or impede the migration process. Among those factors, a person’s education, which is a personal factor that affects his/her cognitive ability, is said to play a role in decision-making about whether or not to migrate. Poor education may result in poor knowledge on the part of a prospective migrant about the situation in an area or country of destination. It may also put a prospective migrant in danger of ill-informed and ill-prepared migration. As a result, he/she may be easily deceived, lured, or trafficked through clandestine channels into degrading sexual or economic exploitation or even worse forms of labour at the destination (International Organization for Migration, 2001; International Labour Organization/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, 1998).

In practice, however, migration can be either voluntary or forced, and may even contain elements of both. The demand for migrant workers is a major factor in the rising intensity of migration to developed countries (United Nations, 2006). According to the Global Commission on International Migration (2005), widening economic and social disparities could lead to a greater number of irregular migrants willing to flout regulations in exchange for the promise of a better life.

In much sociological and anthropological literature, migration is seen in a negative context, in both economic and social terms. Yet at the same time, there is evidence suggesting that migration can be a method of accumulating human and social capital, and thus of enhancing human security.

The World Bank (2005: 35) estimated a global net gain of US\$356 billion in real income, or 0.6 per cent, by 2025 from an increase in migration of an additional 14 million migrants from developing to high-income countries – higher than the projected income gain from reducing trade restrictions. It represents a voice calling for more guest-worker programmes to accelerate poverty reduction in developing countries. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2006) as well, remittances from skilled and unskilled migrants overseas provide an important source of income and help to alleviate poverty for migrants’ family members left at home.

Based on the above notions, migration is a phenomenon of opportunities and challenges. This is particularly true in Southeast Asia, where migration serves as a challenge to policy-makers to achieve fully its potential economic benefits beyond remittances in reducing poverty and increasing productivity, while managing the associated social and political implications.

From a migration management perspective, irregular migration is a key concern. The Global Commission on International Migration (2005) maintains that irregular migration has many negative consequences, not least for the migrants themselves. It can also be a threat to social cohesion, political stability, and economic growth. In destination countries, irregular migration can generate xenophobic sentiments and make it more difficult for regular migrants to integrate. On the other hand, one may argue that migration of the qualified and the skilled can be beneficial for the country of origin because of the social and economic returns. And successful stories of qualified migrants have stimulated those left behind to pursue further education and training in order to enjoy the labour market and a better life beyond what they might have had without migrating (Stark, 2002).

The key question in these “marginal” investigations for the twenty-first century is how to turn migration into a win-win situation, with contributions to both sending and receiving countries beyond what there might have been without migration? This is also the key question in this study on migration management for human security.

Studies on migration have mainly focused on the human rights approach, with little attention to human security. Human rights are extending the scope of institutional mechanisms at the multilateral level by providing clearly articulated and widely accepted legal notions for legislative and practical responses.¹ Yet those same notions of human security are still in the process of developing. This is despite the recognition of human rights as being the vital core of the protection of human security, and of the fact that these two are supposed to be reinforcing each other. This is particularly in terms of having human rights help us to answer the question: how should human security be promoted?

Patterns of ASEAN migration

Mass migration across the ASEAN region is only a recent phenomenon. This is despite the fact that transnational migration in ASEAN can be traced back in the history of Southeast Asia and of each individual member country of ASEAN, as well as being part of transnational migration in Asia as a whole, which is at the forefront of dramatic population

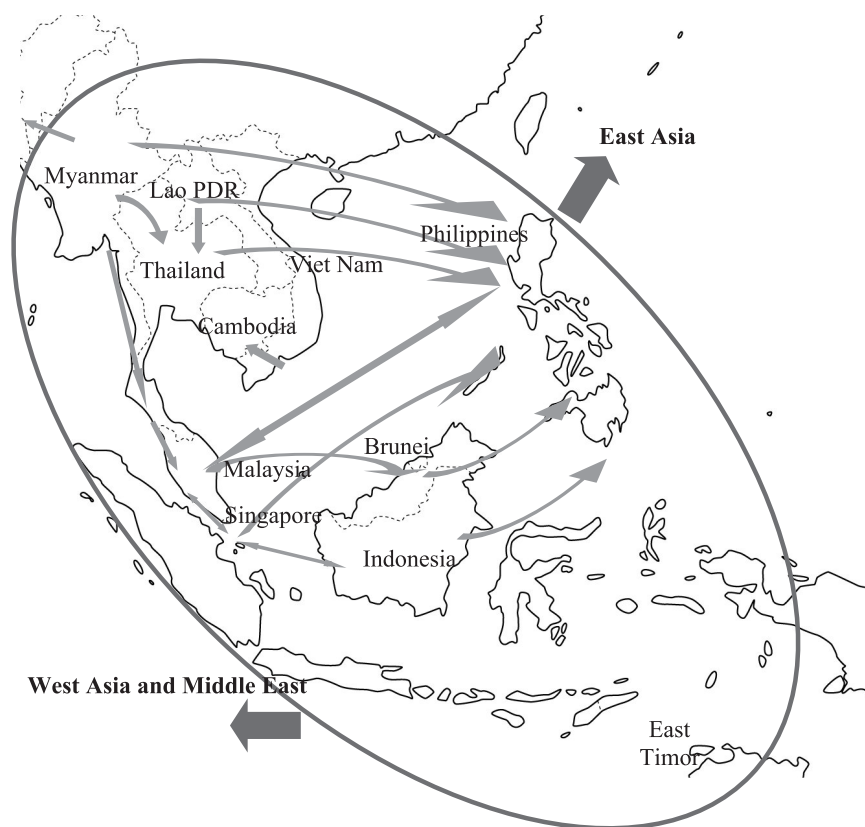


Figure 7.1 Flows of ASEAN migrant workers, December 2006

Source: Wongboonsin (2007).

movement in the world (United Nations, 1998: 119). ASEAN member countries are now in “the age of migration” (Castles and Miller, 1993).

ASEAN as a whole was an out-migration region until a decade ago. As shown in figure 7.1, intra-ASEAN flows now represent the dominating trend, with Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand as major receiving countries. The flows are mostly on a temporary basis, as opposed to permanent settlement. Contractual migration covers all levels of skills. Flows of high-end migrant workers from within and outside the ASEAN region are rising, albeit at a lower rate than those of low-end migrants. Receiving countries of these high-end migrant workers in the ASEAN region include both traditional and emerging economies (Pang, 1992; College of Population Studies and Institute of Asian Studies, 1999).

Among others, Thailand has become a host to both regular and irregular workers. The magnitude of the latter has increased 10-fold in the

2000s from below 10,000 persons in 1990. Low-end irregular migrant flows into Thailand belong to three categories, for which exact information is unavailable: daily commuters, and seasonal and yearly migrants. Some stay along the borders; others are mobile or have moved into other parts of the territory (Wongboonsin, 2006b).

Irregular flows of economic-driven migration within the region range from unskilled to skilled levels. The problem is further complicated by two subtypes of migratory flows: smuggling of migrants and trafficking of persons, especially women and children. Trafficked workers are victims of deception or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. Both the smuggling of migrants and the trafficking of persons are seen as the fastest-growing forms of organized crime. According to the International Organization for Migration (2001), Southeast Asia accounts for one-third of the world's trafficking victims.

Many countries in the region have lately turned into both source and transit countries for trafficking. The trafficking routes have extended from the main Myanmar-Thailand route in the Greater Mekong subregion (GMS) towards those between the GMS and the IMT-GT – that is, from Myanmar to Malaysia. Lao PDR and Thailand have also turned into transit points for trafficking routes from Myanmar, China, and Viet Nam to elsewhere within the region and beyond. Meanwhile, Indonesia is both a source and a transit country for men, women, and children trafficked internationally for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, while the country also faces a significant internal trafficking problem. Indonesian victims are trafficked to Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Australia. To a much lesser extent, Indonesia is a destination for women from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Thailand, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Venezuela, Spain, and Ukraine who are trafficked for sexual exploitation (ARCPPT Myanmar, 2006; US Department of State, 2005a, 2005b).

ASEAN migrant workers

Table 7.1 identifies migrant workers from each ASEAN member country, based on their characteristics, push factors, destinations, and routes of migration. It supports figure 7.1 in suggesting that the trend shown by the majority of migrant workers at the unskilled level and on up to semi-skilled levels is that of movement within the region to fill the labour needs or shortages experienced by the more developed, high-growth, labour-importing countries, particularly Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Thailand. Among other things, the demands for work-

ers in these countries are in such sectors as manufacturing, construction, plantation work, services, and domestic work. The nature of most of the work engaged in by these migrant workers can be described by the well-known epithet “4D”, that is “dangerous, difficult, dirty, and devalued” – the basic attributes of secondary labour market employment.

As suggested by table 7.1, human insecurity in a sending country is a key push factor for migration in the region. Yet the explanations regarding the migration of workers in ASEAN are more complicated in certain cases than in others. For example, reasons for people to leave Myanmar in the present period include forced labour, forced relocation to make way for multinational investments and tourism projects, economic hardship, and political conflict and civil war. According to the US Department of State (2005a), the Burmese armed forces continue to force ethnic minorities to serve as porters during military operations in ethnic areas. Fearing persecution, millions of people from Myanmar have migrated into neighbouring countries over the past decade and find themselves desperate to survive, obtaining work in underground and often illegal labour markets. Those fleeing to Thailand were estimated at up to 2 million people working in dangerous, dirty, difficult, and devalued jobs. There is also internal trafficking within Myanmar. Myanmar citizens are trafficked to be exploited labour in factories, the fishing industry, and construction, beggars or street sellers, into domestic servitude, and for sexual exploitation. Trafficking of Myanmar nationals occurs against a background of high levels of human insecurity as well as significant irregular labour migration, predominantly to Thailand (ARCPPT Myanmar, 2006; College of Population Studies and Institute of Asian Studies, 1999; US Department of State, 2005b).

Cambodia is also a source of migrant workers in the ASEAN region. A number of Cambodian nationals are trafficked to work in the construction and agricultural sectors, particularly the fishing industry, in Thailand, and as beggars and sex industry workers in Viet Nam and Thailand (US Department of State, 2005a). This has taken place against a backdrop of low human development in Cambodia (0.56 in 2006), entrenched inequality in development spanning across gender and geographical locations, poor education, and an estimated 36 per cent of the population living below basic needs and the national poverty line (United Nations Development Programme, 2006; YOUANDAIDS, 2007). In comparison, the majority of victims trafficked into Cambodia have been lowland Lao, although small numbers of highland minority women have also been victimized by traffickers. Minority groups are particularly vulnerable because they do not have the cultural familiarity or linguistic proximity to Thai that Lao-speaking workers can use to help protect themselves from exploitative situations (US Department of State, 2005a). Forced labour

Table 7.1 ASEAN migrant workers

Country of origin	Major push factors	Destinations in alphabetical order (<i>main</i>)		Major routes	Major category of migrant workers in ASEAN destinations
		Non-ASEAN	ASEAN		
Brunei Darussalam		Australia, Canada, Germany, UK, USA	Philippines	Not available	High-end
Cambodia	Chronic and extreme poverty, lack of access to education and training, landlessness, lack of employment, lack of access to markets, materialism, debt, and natural disasters (droughts, floods) Presence of landmines has reduced usability of land for agriculture and further reduced economic opportunities in rural areas	Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Qatar, USA, other Asian countries	<i>Thailand</i> (182,007 registered, of whom 75,804 with work permits in 2005) Malaysia (ranging from 6,620 to around 20,000 migrants in 1998–2006)	Short-term: along Cambodia-Thai border Long-term: from central Cambodia to several destinations beyond Thai border Main routes of irregular migration to Thailand: along southern coastal areas of Cambodia, particularly from Koh Kong to Klong Yai district in Trat in Thailand, and from Poipet to Aranyaprathet in Thailand	Irregular, low-end, facilitated by a network of recruiters (<i>neak noams</i>) to 4D jobs, which only allow workers to maintain status quo rather than improving living standard Both registered and undocumented, mostly working in fishery, construction, and agricultural sectors in Thailand Female migrant workers also found in commercial sex work, begging, and domestic service; vulnerability to trafficking

Indonesia	Poverty and high unemployment	Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, UAE, USA	Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore	Not available	Low-end; some trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour
Lao PDR	Poverty (with better education in rural areas and some knowledge of life in other destinations)	Australia, Canada, Germany, France, USA	Philippines, <i>Thailand</i> (over 180,000 irregular migrants in 2006)	From northern provinces; majority of trafficking victims are lowland Lao	Low-end, mostly irregular Trafficking victims found working in forced labour, domestic servitude, and prostitution
Malaysia	Not available	Australia, UK, USA	Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore	Not available	Not available
Myanmar	Economic hardship, political and civil war, forced labour, forced relocation to make way for multinational investments and tourism projects	Australia, India, USA	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, <i>Thailand</i>	From Tenasserim coastline, Mon state, Karen state, Shan state, Rangoon division, Pegu division, Mandalay division, Kachin state, and Arakan state to Thailand	Low-end, irregular: 300 migrants reportedly cross Myanmar-Thailand border checkpoint each day; of these, roughly 40% try to go further into interior of Thailand Many Mon work in rubber plantations, agriculture,

Table 7.1 (cont.)

Country of origin	Major push factors	Destinations in alphabetical order (<i>main</i>)		Major routes	Major category of migrant workers in ASEAN destinations
		Non-ASEAN	ASEAN		
					construction, and fishing in southern and central Thailand Myanmar people are trafficked predominantly into Thailand, and increasingly to China and Malaysia for exploited labour in factories, fishing, construction, as beggars or street sellers, domestic servitude, and for sexual exploitation
Philippines	Poverty, unemployment, underemployment	Australia, Canada, Japan, Saudi Arabia, USA	Malaysia	Not available	Skilled
Singapore	Not available	Australia, Canada, UK, USA	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines	Not available	High-end

Thailand	Poverty, unemployment, low growth	Cambodia, China, Taiwan, USA	Malaysia, Philippines	Northeast, particularly from Udon Thani and Chaiyaphum provinces	Regular and irregular, from low- to high-end Almost 30% decline of labour emigration from 2000 to 147,769 migrants in 2003, with a decreasing share of ASEAN and other Asian destinations Though there is continuing domination of low- end migrant labour with primary education, its share started to decline in 2000 This compares to an increase in skilled migrants above grade four to work as equipment operators and service workers

Table 7.1 (cont.)

Country of origin	Major push factors	Destinations in alphabetical order (main)		Major routes	Major category of migrant workers in ASEAN destinations
		Non-ASEAN	ASEAN		
Viet Nam	Severe poverty, unemployment, and low growth	Australia, Canada, France, Germany, <i>Japan</i> , <i>South Korea</i> , southern China, <i>Taiwan</i> (71,000 legal migrants in 2006), USA	<i>Malaysia</i> , Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand	Three known trafficking routes: from northern Viet Nam to China, mainly for marriage; from southern Viet Nam via Cambodia to Thailand, Macao, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Australia, etc., mainly for sex work; and from provinces along Mekong River to Taiwan and South Korea, mainly for marriages organized by mail-order bride agencies and intermediaries	Thousands of low-skilled Vietnamese migrate to work on a short-term and often unauthorized basis, including trafficking, in southern China, Cambodia, and Lao PDR Contract workers from Viet Nam work in construction, furniture, restaurants, and for small traders in Lao PDR Some skilled and unskilled Vietnamese work in construction, trading, machinery and electronic repair workshops, and wood-processing enterprises in Phnom Penh

Some Vietnamese
work without
authorization after
graduation in
Thailand

Source: Based on Biddulph (2004), College of Population Studies and Institute of Asian Studies (1999), Dang (2006), www.migrationinformation.org, International Organization for Migration (2001), Maltoni (2006), *Migration News* (2007), Scalabrini (undated), Sidedine (1998), US Department of State (2005a, 2005b), Wongboonsin (2002, 2005).

and forced relocation to Thailand are prominent examples. They are represented by the effect of the Gulf of Martaban gas pipeline on the people of the Tenasserim coast (Fahn, 1994).

A study comparing Thai and Myanmar migrant workers maintains that despite opportunities for a better income as the major reason for migration both into and out of Thailand, the factors explaining the decision of Thai migrants to move out of Thailand were more complicated than those motivating migrants from Myanmar to move into Thailand. For the outflow of Thai labour, the factors explaining the migration decision are the income-type pull factors, their low level of education, and the wish to upgrade the economic status of their families back home. The case is particularly clear for those who have migrated more than once. This implies that better education may reduce the chances of transnational migration of Thai labour (Wongboonsin, 2001).

At the same time, migrant workers from Cambodia are often driven by an overwhelming dominance of push over pull factors. The former include chronic poverty, landlessness, lack of employment, lack of access to markets, the growth of materialism, debt, and natural disasters such as droughts and floods. Their movement is facilitated by a network of recruiters, locally referred to as *neak noams*, in Cambodia. The workers often find employment in 4D jobs, which allow them only to maintain the status quo rather than improving their standard of living (Sidedine, 1998; Biddulph, 2004; Maltoni, 2006).

In Lao PDR studies suggested that it was not the most impoverished who were likely to emigrate, but rather better-educated people from rural areas with some knowledge of life in Thailand. According to a survey of all age groups of Lao migrants from the provinces of Champassak, Savannakhet, and Khammuan, 75 per cent of total migration has occurred within the last three years, compared to less than 5 per cent prior to 1989. This includes Lao migrants under the age of 18, with girls accounting for more than two-thirds of the migrants. Lao girls are particularly vulnerable to cross-border traffickers for forced labour, domestic servitude, and the sex industry. About 17 per cent of these trafficking cases from Laos were reported to be missing (US Department of State, 2005a; *Vientiane Times*, 2006).

Meanwhile, poverty in rural areas, high unemployment, and underemployment are explanations for Indonesian workers migrating both internally and across the border. By the end of 2006 11.6 million people, or some 11 per cent of Indonesian workers, were jobless. There were also 45 million underemployed, working fewer than 35 hours a week. Trafficked Indonesian migrants end up in situations of commercial sexual exploitation and other forced labour, such as involuntary domestic servitude (US Department of State, 2005a, 2006b; *Migration News*, 2007). Pre-

vious studies suggest that brokerage and migration networks have also played an important role in the outflow of migrant workers from all developing countries in ASEAN. The porous borders throughout the region facilitate these flows (Wongboonsin, 2001, 2002).

In all places, border areas have become a critical concern in recent years. They are focal points for trade, commerce, and services. Moreover, they have turned into sources of and transit points for trafficking in persons for prostitution. Border areas often become “neutral” zones, where law and order may be lax and the presence of entrepreneurs catering to the itinerant populations leads to these places becoming havens for activities such as illicit gambling and commercial sex. Some border areas that are known sites for gambling have recently established casinos with hotels and shopping complexes. Increasing trade and the construction of more buildings and infrastructure add to the ease with which travellers and other types of mobile people can reach remote border points and spend time there. The Thai-Myanmar and Thai-Malaysian borders contain such sites, which are among the most risky border areas in the Greater Mekong subregion and in Southeast Asia (Wongboonsin, 2008b).

From poverty to human security

This study argues that ASEAN is currently facing the problem that the migration of workers has not yet solved the problem of poverty, and is in some ways aggravating human insecurity beyond poverty. Such insecurity is taking place at all levels of the society. The ASEAN countries are no exception to other Asian countries where migrants, employers, and national economies are in traps of insecure and unsustainable socioeconomic development (Wongboonsin and Kinnas, 2005; Wongboonsin, 2006a).

At the individual level, many migrant workers are reportedly facing poor and abusive working conditions with insecure incomes. This is particularly the case for irregular and unskilled migrants, who may also be the victims of traffickers. Most of the jobs engaged in by irregular and unskilled migrant workers are those often refused by the local workforce. Migrants from Myanmar work in a wide array of jobs at the unskilled and semi-skilled levels, from jobs on fishing boats to domestic help. Cambodians along the Thai border are woodworkers, seasonal agricultural labour, and fishermen. There are also Cambodians working on construction sites in Bangkok and in the fishery industry well inside the Thai border. As a major market area with extensive trading, Aranyaprathet is the main border crossing between Thailand and Cambodia. Laotian labourers are found in agriculture, construction, domestic service sectors,

and restaurants (Chalamwong, 1996; Stern, 1998). They are at risk of poor living conditions and vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse. In the long term they may end up in an unsustainable working life that does not offer the appropriate human development for them to maintain a dignified life.

At the business level in Thailand, employers have to face traps of insecure and unsustainable competitiveness resulting from their hesitation to invest in more productive human resources with quality skills and competencies to meet the challenges of the new economy. After a mass lay-off of workers, and a plunge into a sunset industry during the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis, businesses in low-tech, labour-intensive industries such as clothing became uncompetitive. They are heading for a “genuine crisis” again at the time of this writing because the local currency, the baht, has recently been relentlessly strengthening against the dollar. Up to 300,000 workers in the industry were expected to lose their jobs when the factory owners decided on business closure, according to the Thai Textile Manufacturing Association (*Forbes Magazine*, 2007; Kittikul-singh, 1999; Wongboonsin, Tanitkul, and Intraratana, 2003).

If there are an incompetent workforce and unsustainable, uncompetitive businesses, the economy of a receiving country in the region is subject to minimized opportunities to capitalize on the current demographic dividend² in order to move towards a value-added and competitive industry based on the identity, managerial expertise, and higher technical skills of the workforce. Meanwhile, low-income sending countries of unskilled migrant workers are subject to the loss of opportunities to upgrade their mobile human resources at the labour-force age. If they could upgrade, their mobile human resources would be able to attain skills and competencies to optimize the demographic dividend of their countries. Instead, as it now stands, once the unskilled migrant workers return home after passing beyond working age, one may expect them to become part of the ageing population as a financial burden, rather than part of the productive workforce of the society.

At the regional level there is a combined impact of the vulnerabilities of ASEAN member countries in terms of the unsustainability of their socio-economic security in the new economic era. The people in the region, as a result, may not gain a sustainable opportunity to enjoy their well-being and freedom to move forward on their own towards positive development with dignity. As sending countries of unskilled migrant workers, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia remain low-income countries with labour-intensive economic activities and production. The gross national income (GNI) per capita of Cambodia in 2005 was only US\$880, with a 0.583 Human Development Index (HDI), ranking 103 in international competitiveness. This is compared to \$440 GNI with 0.553 HDI and \$220 GNI with 0.581 HDI in Lao PDR and Myanmar, respectively

(United Nations Development Programme, 2006; World Economic Forum, 2006).

Migration management in ASEAN

Explanations of the above-mentioned shortcomings are complex. Among others, this study argues that they are partly the side-effects of self-defeating strategies in migration management, particularly those undertaken at the unilateral level, during the past decades. The complex nature of labour migration itself, combined with knowledge gaps in policy-making, has contributed to the difficulties of adequately managing labour migration in the region. As elsewhere, all migration statistics contain a number of uncertainties, as they do not reflect the whole picture of labour migration in the region. The shortcomings are also explained by weak enforcement and loopholes contained in the relevant regimes, as well as a lack of focal authority (Wongboonsin et al., 2007).

Migration management in the region can be classified into three dimensions: control, protection, and promotion. This study maintains that until recently migration control was the focus of migration management in ASEAN. The unilateral approach adopted by ASEAN member countries focused on branch-off policies and control-based strategies with complex, double-standard, incoherent, selective, and impractical measures, plagued by an unclear position towards the supply side of labour migration.

In Thailand, for example, after the mid-1990s labour migration management became a major concern. It was reflected in the government perception of the immigration level being too high and the emigration level being too low in 2000 compared to satisfactory levels in 1990, despite the migration stock reaching only 0.6 per cent of the Thai population. While Thailand had a labour export policy and attempted to deal with labour emigration on a proactive basis, the case was different when the government dealt with an inflow of labour migration. Given the lack of a coherent labour import policy, Thailand dealt with migration and the employment of migrant labour simply by reacting to the circumstances at any given time.

During the 1990s Thailand adopted an unclear approach of a stop-and-go nature to labour migration from neighbouring countries. The problem was particularly pronounced when dealing with the inflows and employment of migrant labour during the early 1990s and the 1997–1998 economic crisis. At times the relevant policies and regimes during this period were more in response to socio-political security concerns, doubts in terms of real demand for migrant labour, and threats of nationwide strikes by domestic workers. The latter were particularly strongly expressed by the Thai Labour Congress, which was concerned that the

employment of migrant labour would result in hundreds of thousands of Thai workers losing their jobs and might also lead to social problems. At other times they were more responsive to calls from the private sector for business survival and international comparative advantage (Wongboonsin, 2006b).

This dilemma existed against the backdrop of the complexities of labour migration, insufficient knowledge of factors affecting its flows, and different perceptions of labour migration among involved agencies and other stakeholders. It was difficult to strike a balance among these perceptions. They included national social and political security based on nationalism; economic security based on neoliberalism in order to achieve international comparative advantage and competitiveness; and human rights and labour protection based on humanitarianism. Thailand also maintained complicated legislative and regulatory regimes governing the entry and stay of foreign nationals, as reflected in more than 20 Acts, royal decrees, ministerial orders, and other regulations governing the entry and stay of migrant workers. As mentioned above, some were primarily based on social and political security concerns while others reflected neoliberal and humanitarian perceptions (*ibid.*).

Migration management has not yet achieved all the expected outcomes, which include the goals of optimizing the benefits of regional labour migration; minimizing the adverse effects of the flows; and guaranteeing an orderly, humane, and safe migration of labour (Wongboonsin, 2006a). The years 2003–2005 saw some signs of improvement in migration management in the ASEAN region. This was particularly true in the GMS, with efforts to integrate returnees into better-skilled job segments within Thailand and add a bilateral approach to unilateral migration management for an orderly flow of labour migration from neighbouring countries. These were based on bilateral memoranda of understanding on cooperation in labour recruitment between the Thai Ministry of Labour and Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar, in order to support a recent initiative to strengthen economic cooperation among these three neighbouring countries (*ibid.*).

A review of legislative and regulatory regimes governing migration within the ASEAN region after 2005, however, suggests an ongoing dependence on control-based strategies using a supply-side approach to migration management, with further improvement indicated at unilateral, bilateral, subregional, and regional levels in the following three measures (Wongboonsin et al., 2007).

- Anti-trafficking: adoption of anti-trafficking legislation and responsive units, and abandonment of prosecution measures against trafficking victims for immigration offences.
- Protection of migrant workers and trafficking victims.

- Promotion of an orderly flow of migrants with pre-departure training based on human resource development (HRD), skill-standard development, a mutual recognition arrangement for occupational skills, and more reliance on private recruitment agencies.

Nevertheless, the degree of priority given to each of these measures varies across the region. While Cambodia is beginning to focus on promotion of labour exports, anti-trafficking is becoming a key concern to Lao PDR, Thailand, and Myanmar. The Philippines and Indonesia have emphasized the protection of migrant workers against discrimination and exploitation.

This study maintains that these counter-trafficking responses are still very young in the region, as are the protection and promotion measures. Despite the existence of a monitoring process as stipulated in Article 16 of Sub-Decree No. 57, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in Cambodia needs to cope with its limited personnel and capacity building in order to monitor malpractice by private recruitment agencies, as well as monitoring the living and working conditions of Cambodian migrant workers abroad. Similarly, the Lao government is said to provide minimal assistance to victims of trafficking, continuing rather to refer victims to non-governmental and international organizations that run protection programmes for victims. The government has recently expanded its engagement with non-governmental organizations and requested their assistance in providing vocational training and establishing another shelter for returnees. In addition to educating provincial and district-level officials on the need to protect trafficking victims, Laos is encouraged to put more effort into distinguishing trafficking victims from returning migrants who had left the country illegally. A slow pace of implementation of the protection of migrant workers is also found in Indonesia (US Department of State, 2005b; Maltoni, 2006: 20–22; *Migration News*, 2007).

In terms of the promotion of measures for an orderly flow of migrant workers, pre-departure training, development of skill standards, and a mutual recognition arrangement for skill standards are still at an infant stage, with limited scope and slow pace of progress. Pre-departure training is yet to provide a balance between specific occupational skills, safety at a recognized standard, and training in the work system, lifestyle, customs, traditions, and common laws of the receiving country (Wongboonsin et al., 2007).

A review of policies and legislative regimes governing the flows of migration across the Asian, Pacific, and European regions suggests that there is a trend in which destination countries are becoming more and more selective of human capital with labour market skills and competencies. Such skill-selective migration policies and regimes serve as a tool of the

receiving countries to promote their international competitiveness in the skill-and-knowledge-based economy of the twenty-first century (Wongboonsin, 2003, 2008a). Yet an efficient flow of labour migration which benefits both sending and receiving countries is needed to alleviate skill imbalances through the capacity building of all people concerned. The critical factor in building such capacity is the development of the human capital potential of the people in both the supply and the stock of the workforce, together with processes for the recognition and transferability of their skills across borders. Universal good education and skills adaptable to the changing needs of the labour market are the bedrock upon which human capital, capacity, and workforce productivity are built. While improving the employability of human capital, such a human capital approach to migration management can also be expected to contribute to less exploitation of the workforce, an efficient labour market, and a more productive economy. Moreover, the ability of people to move to decent work in a distant place without exploitation and discrimination, while earning more skills, is a part of their human capital. Besides remittances while they are away, migrant workers will be able to transfer their skills to contribute to the home economy upon their return (Wongboonsin et al., 2007).

Needed strategies

ASEAN is paving the way for an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) to be formed by the year 2015. This is to enable a stable, prosperous, and highly competitive economic region. In addition to a free flow of goods, services, investment, and capital, the greater mobility of professionals, experts, and skilled labour is expected to contribute to the goal. Yet meanwhile ASEAN is facing the new threat of a fading demographic dividend across the region, starting with the populations of Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam, that will presumably appear by the target year of the AEC (2015).

Given the dynamic trend of the world's increasingly competitive knowledge-based economy, it is necessary for ASEAN to move fast to minimize the regional gap in the development of its human resources. Regional cooperation is particularly necessary in order to upgrade the productivity and efficiency of the regional workforce, including both its stock and its supply, to provide resources for a competitive AEC. Besides making a great contribution to freedom from want and freedom from fear by bringing vulnerable people into the value chain of human capital to attain human security, the provision of upgraded education, skills, and competencies to such vulnerable people could serve as an intervening ob-

stacle against the choice of irregular migration. Together with mutual recognition arrangements for the skills and competencies of the regional workforce, the new AEC would then be equipped with the efficient labour markets needed for its envisioned competitiveness.

ASEAN is encouraged to adopt a human development approach to human security. This will serve to optimize the contribution of intra-regional flows of human capital to sustained socio-economic development, while minimizing negative impacts on the member countries and their people. It will also serve to maximize the contribution of mobile human capital for further development with dignity beyond what they might have had without migration. ASEAN is encouraged to undertake the following actions by the year 2015 (Wongboonsin et al., 2007).

- A regional partnership to establish a growing, flexible, and productive regional labour market for the resilience of the economies concerned, as well as the well-being of the workforce and the people at large.
- A regional partnership in migration management, on an organized basis, using a regional win-win human capital pooling policy, in order to serve the growing, flexible, and productive regional labour market without the worst forms or conditions of labour.
- Besides mutual recognition arrangements for skills and workforce qualifications, a regional partnership in the development of skills for the workforce up to a mutually recognized standard is the key for regional human capital pooling in order to perform sustainably on a long-term basis.
- A regional partnership in the capitalization of existing skill development facilities in the region, in order to minimize the cost of investment in workforce development incurred by each individual country.
- An ASEAN Centre for Productivity and Standards of Workforce (see fig. 7.2) should be established by 2015 to equip the region with appropriate and up-to-date inputs of information and forecasts of demand and supply in the labour market, in both quantity and quality (or competency) terms, on a sectoral and occupational basis; and regional surveillance systems and standards to ensure that the mobile regional workforce, regardless of age, race, gender, social class, or economic status, can attain recognized levels of human security in terms of basic needs, skill standards, and human development, as well as dignity.
- Subregional and bilateral cooperation between sending and receiving countries should be strengthened by 2010 to provide the impetus and channels for migrant workers to enjoy rights to human development with dignity, while facilitating the integration and reintegration of migrant workers in order to contribute better to both host and home countries.

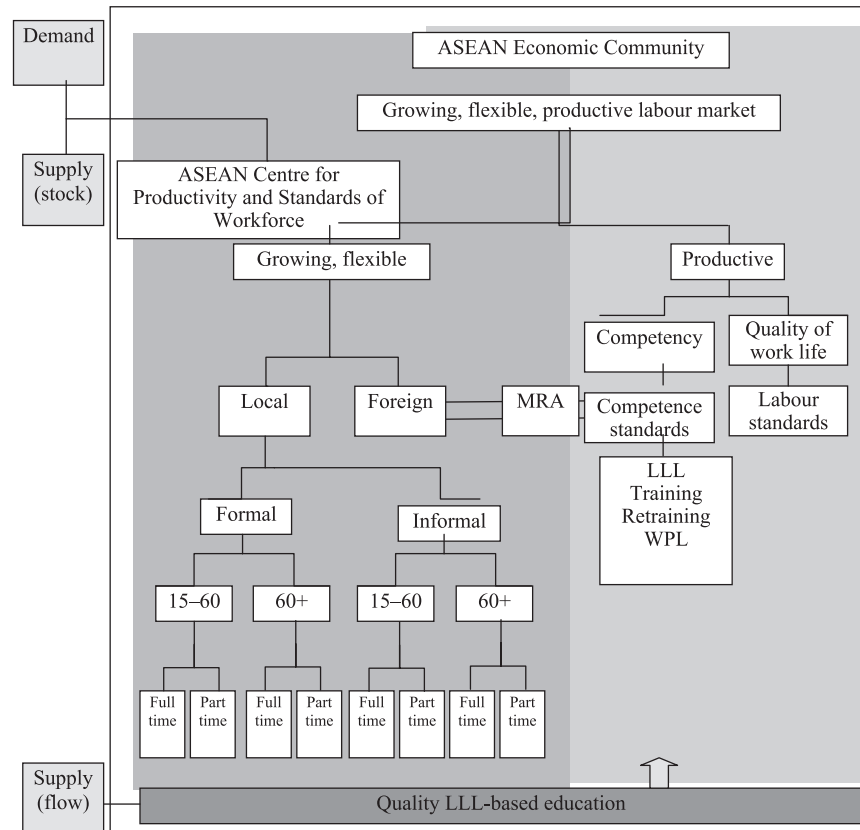


Figure 7.2 ASEAN Centre for Production and Standards of Workforce
Source: Wongboonsin et al. (2007).

Conclusions

Migration is a question of opportunities and challenges. This is particularly true in the ASEAN region, where migration serves as a challenge to policy-makers to achieve fully its potential economic benefits, beyond remittances, in reducing poverty and increasing productivity while managing its associated social and political implications.

This chapter argues that explanations of the flow of irregular migration in the region are complex. They involve the human insecurity factors of political conflicts, poverty, and poor education. It also argues that the problem of migration is more complicated in certain cases than in others,

and that human development may reduce the flows of an irregular nature while optimizing the benefits of migration beyond what migrants might have had without migration. It argues that until recently the unilateral management strategies of Asian countries that were meant to target the migration flows were mainly self-defeating. A side-effect of such policies was that migrants, their employers, and the national economies faced traps of insecure and unsustainable socio-economic development. Yet despite the ongoing dependence on such control-based strategies that use a supply-side approach to migration, it is clear that the situation could be improved through management at all levels, including unilateral, bilateral, subregional, and regional, particularly for the three measures of anti-trafficking, protection of migrant workers and trafficking victims, and the promotion of an orderly flow of migrants with pre-departure training, HRD, and development of skill standards, with a mutual recognition arrangement for occupational skills.

These new measures are as yet very young and do need further improvement. ASEAN needs to move fast to minimize the regional gap in the development of its human resources. Regional cooperation to upgrade the productivity and efficiency of the regional workforce, in terms of both the stock and the supply, is of great importance to provide the resources for a competitive ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. The six measures proposed above are recommended for both immediate and medium-term actions. These recommendations can serve to optimize the contribution of intra-regional flows of human capital, provide sustained socio-economic development of the countries concerned and their people, minimize negative impacts on their human capital, and maximize the opportunities of mobile human capital for their further development with dignity beyond what they might have had without migration.

Notes

1. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its protocols proclaim the civil, political, economic, and social rights of all people. The 1993 Vienna Declaration of Human Rights stresses the universality and interdependence of the human rights of all people. Particularly for migrants, there is also the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
2. The demographic dividend can be defined simply as the economic benefit deriving from a demographic transition. It is a one-time window of opportunity, occurring only once during the demographic transition, and is available for only a short period. An increase in the dependency ratio signals the fading away of the opportunity to capitalize on the demographic conditions for a demographic dividend. The benefit can accrue at both the individual and the societal levels.

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8

Pesticide dependence in agriculture: Policy for productivity and policy for security in Viet Nam

Tran Duc Vien and Pham Van Hoi

Introduction

Viet Nam's agriculture has undergone a drastic transformation since the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. A series of reform policies, collectively known as *Doi Moi* and aimed at introducing a market economy in general and increasing agricultural productivity in particular, spurred the transformation. Increasing agricultural productivity has lifted Viet Nam from being one of the poorest countries in the mid-1980s and placed it on a growth path since then. Although still far behind the East Asian "miracle" economies, the sustained growth at an annual rate of more than 6.5 per cent throughout the 1990s nearly halved the poverty rate from some 75 per cent of the population to 37 per cent in 2000. Even the disruption of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, while discrediting much of the "East Asian miracle" of the 1980s and 1990s, did not derail Viet Nam from this growth path (Glewwe, 2004).

At the same time, this economic achievement is not without costs. Among them are the widening income gap, destabilization of the communal basis, and over-urbanization (World Bank, 2000, 2001). Environmental degradation, especially caused by the abuse of agrochemicals, may top the list of such costs. The adverse impact of agrochemicals such as pesticides on the environment and human health is pervasive, as reported briefly by an international team of scientists and environmentalists (Carvalho et al., 1998). The use of agrochemicals is also ironic, because it is considered an essential ingredient for the economic growth that has

proven beneficial to Viet Nam, even though the issue of a more equitable internal distribution of the economic gains has remained critical. The use of agrochemicals may symbolize the changes which make life worse, as indicated by Umegaki's human insecurity V-curve (in this volume), before improving it.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a glimpse of the abuse of pesticides in agriculture and their effects on both human and environmental conditions, especially in rural Viet Nam. The chapter begins with an overview of agricultural policies, including those related to pesticide use and management. Following this is a description of the trend in pesticide use in agriculture. An analysis of the situation of food contaminated with pesticides and the problem of water pollution, as well as the impacts of these issues on people's health, is then undertaken.

Agricultural development policies in Viet Nam

Towards a higher agricultural yield

Viet Nam launched its *Doi Moi* policies in 1986, and the following years aimed at transforming the previous planned economy to a more market-oriented economy. The essential components of the resulting change affected many aspects of economic life in Viet Nam. These components include abandonment of the centrally planned economic model by transforming Viet Nam's economic management system into a market-oriented one; adoption of an outward-looking policy in external economic relations; encouragement of the non-state sector as the engine of economic growth; and revision of the orientation of industrial policy away from heavy industry (Ebashi, 1997).

Prior to this landmark policy shift, Viet Nam's agricultural sector remained stagnant for a long time. Before unification, the southern half of the country was the centre stage of the war, which devastated the foundations for production, whereas agricultural activities in the northern half, where the collectivization method was dominant, were sustained for the purpose of supporting war efforts. Following unification, the extension of collectivization to the southern half left little flexibility in increasing productivity, as all means of production were collectivized and the cooperatives' officials dominated all important decision-making in agricultural life. The decline in incentives for production stagnated the agricultural sector. A good deal of agricultural land was fallowed. Most alarming was the decline in the rice yield (Tran and Nguyen, 1995).

The stagnant agricultural sector, and Viet Nam's national economy as a whole, first led to a general appeal to increase agricultural and industrial productivity. This was emphasized in Decree No. 6 in 1979 calling

for reform in industry and agriculture by loosening state control, which shifted the emphasis on heavy and large-scale industries to an emphasis on smaller enterprises, among others.

A little more focused upon the agricultural sector, Decree 100/CT, popularly known as Contract 100, was issued in 1981 and began decollectivization. Individual households were given plots to farm by contract, while the cooperatives continued to control the supply of inputs and distribution of the products. However limited the impact upon collectivization may have been, Contract 100 boosted agricultural productivity in Viet Nam compared to the preceding decades. For example, the annual increase in rice production was only 1.9 per cent in the period 1976–1981, while it was 2.8 per cent in the following period, 1982–1987 (Vo, 1995). The vegetable yield decreased at an annual rate of 3.3 per cent during the period 1976–1980, but increased, albeit marginally, to 0.4 per cent per year during the period 1981–1985 (Jansen et al., 1996).

These efforts paved the way for more innovative *Đổi Mới* policies. Of these, especially important are those which had an impact on agricultural productivity.

First, Decree No. 10, commonly known as Contract 10, was issued in 1988, making the individual farming households the basic units of agricultural production and pushing the dismantling of the cooperatives further. The individual households were awarded usufruct rights over the land for 15 years. In exchange, they had to pay an agricultural tax. Contract 10 still restricted the sale, rental, and exchange of land except in certain limited situations. The real grain price was doubled and the distribution of inputs was removed from the control of the cooperatives (Rigg, 1997).

Then, in 1993, Decree No. 5 (the Land Law) was issued, aiming at the allocation of agricultural land to individual households for longer-term use: 20 years for annual crops and 50 years for perennial crops. Farming households were awarded five rights in land use: exchange, transaction, mortgage, hiring, and inheritance. A land ceiling was instituted, too, allowing a maximum of 10 ha for annual crops and 30 ha for perennial crops (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, hereafter SRV, 1996).

These measures may have worked positively on the farmers' motivation to increase their productivity. Other factors helped the farmers sustain the efforts towards higher productivity, such as the opening of domestic and overseas markets for their products. A series of measures in the late 1980s removed many of the restrictions on export, and Decree No. 140 in 1997 removed domestic trade restrictions on rice, which had previously depressed the price of rice in the south. Along with the demand for more products, one factor cannot be overlooked: the increased access to capital goods such as fertilizers and other agrochemicals (Benjamin and Brandt, 2004).

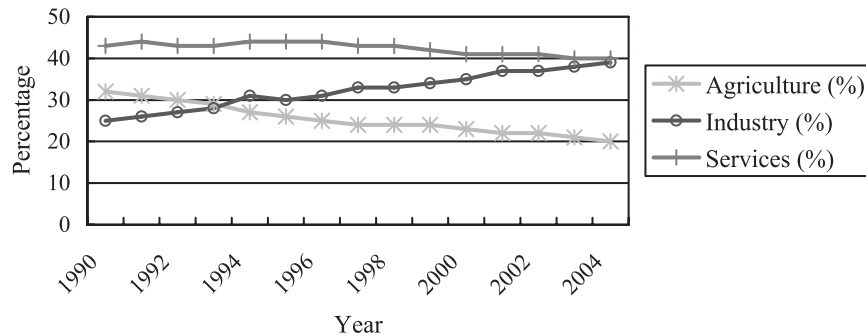


Figure 8.1 Sectoral contribution to Vietnamese GDP, 1990–2004
 Source: General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (2006, 2007).

The net result is the multiplication of agricultural output, though it accounts for a much lower portion of Vietnamese national income as other sectors have increased their contributions. There are several points that we need to observe with caution, however, behind the data testifying to Vietnamese economic achievements since the *Doi Moi* era (fig. 8.1).

First, even though the contribution of the agricultural sector to Viet Nam's national income has decreased from around 40 per cent in 1990 to a little more than 20 per cent in 2004, the sector still employs over 50 per cent of the labour force.

Second, partly because of the promotion of the right of households to use farmland, the average farm size stays at 0.7 ha/household (Ho, 2007), which is comparatively small on a global scale. Additionally, the *Doi Moi* reforms did little for one rural custom which kept landholdings fragmented. Farmers often have fields in scattered spots within the community as a protection from the risk of the entire crop being destroyed if a water shortage affected one part of the community, or some other kind of localized natural disaster took place. What this means is that the use of agrochemicals is intensified by a large portion of the rural population, crammed into small farmlands and under pressure for higher agricultural yield.

Given also the fact that the cooperatives ceased to interfere with the acquisition and distribution of capital goods such as fertilizers and pesticides, Viet Nam's agricultural population has had to face and deal with the threat that these agrochemicals pose, with little or no organizational support.

Managing the threat: Pesticide policy towards stricter regulations

Alarmed by the prospect of uncontrolled use of agrochemicals, especially pesticides, the government launched efforts to manage them early on.

Decree No. 32 of 1984 is one of the earliest macro-policies in Viet Nam on pesticide management (SRV, 1984). But the decree merely mentioned the responsibility of relevant state departments in pesticide management, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Technology (the current Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, hereafter MARD) taking a leading role. In 1990 MARD was assigned to issue a list of pesticides for legal use in Viet Nam on an annual basis (SRV, 1990). MARD (1991) listed 77 types of active ingredients (AIs) that were legally permitted for import, production, distribution, and use in Viet Nam. These were mainly World Health Organization (WHO) toxic class Ib, such as Methamidophos, Lindane, Carbofuran, Dichlorvos, and Dicrotophos, and class II, such as Cartap, Fenobucarb, Endosulfan, Cypermethrin, and Alphacypermethrin, among others.¹ From 1992 the list of pesticides issued by MARD was divided into three categories: permitted for use; restricted for use; and banned from use. The difference between pesticides of the first and second categories is that those in the second category can only be used at specific locations, for specific crops, and by strict application methods (MARD, 1992a, 1992b).

The first comprehensive legal document in Viet Nam on pesticide use and management is Decree No. 92-CP, formulated and issued in 1993 (SRV, 1993). It clarified the objectives of plant protection; the requirements for pesticide production, packaging, distribution, and uses; the responsibility and right of relevant state departments in monitoring and inspecting all activities related to pesticides; and the establishment of a plant protection system from central to district levels, under which Plant Protection Departments (PPDs) are in charge of helping MARD to fulfil state administration in all aspects related to pesticides.

Besides its main aim of pest and disease control, the decree emphasized the safe use of pesticides for people, animals, and the environment. To promote plant protection activities, the decree encouraged all organizations and individuals who were qualified to do business or services for plant protection, including those related to pesticides, to take steps in this area. Further, the decree stipulated that pesticides of the second category, restricted use, were no longer allowed to be advertised.

To reinforce the registration, import, production, trade, and use of the second category of pesticides, MARD (1995) regulated that no new registration be allowed for pesticides in this category (except for those used in the wood industry, disinfection, and the healthcare system). More importantly, the Ministry of Health joined in these efforts to manage hazardous agrochemicals and ordered that all organizations and individuals needed to declare, register, and be certified for the use of the second category of pesticides identified by MARD (MOH, 1999).

The government also pushed for a finer tuning of pesticide management. From 2001 on, in state regulations, the government has considered

pesticides as “special goods with strict limitations on trade”, placing the pesticides trade under specific regulations. To comply with this policy, all activities related to pesticides such as registration, import, production, export, storage, transport, trade, and use have come under state management accordingly (SRV, 2001). In this ordinance, also, biological pesticides are given high priority for research, investment, production, trade, and use. In 2002 MARD regulated that biological pesticides were to be prioritized and follow a different registration system, meaning that they do not have to follow the regulations applied to chemical pesticides in terms of efficacy trials as a procedure required for registration (MARD, 2002).

For the pesticide efficacy trials, MARD (1998) had specified that their aim was to determine the pest- and disease-controlling effect (efficacy), and the side-effects on plants, people, animals, and the environment. In 2003 the regulations for efficacy trials further specified that such trials as a procedure required for registration needed to be performed in accordance with specific characteristics of different crops, such as annual and perennial. For specific crops such as vegetables, fruit, and tea, MARD (2003) emphasized that the efficacy trial needs to evaluate the proper pre-harvest interval (PHI) and the effects on food quality.

Finally, the responsibility of pesticide users was made explicit early on. Decree No. 92-CP (SRV, 1993) regulates that pesticide users need to follow strictly the guidelines of technical staff in the local authority or those given on the labels of pesticide packages and bottles to ensure a proper dosage, timing, and the appropriate types of crop. Following this, MARD (2002) further made clear that pesticide users are lawfully responsible for their activities, especially those related to improper use of pesticides and the use of banned or unknown-origin pesticides that may harm people and animal health as well as the environment.

Legislative efforts by the government to control the use of pesticides and other hazardous agrochemicals have been persistent and thorough. It is, however, entirely a different matter as to whether or not the rules are observed and enforced. The real dilemma for the actual users of the chemicals is that while they may see ample evidence of the benefits of using chemicals, directly linking adverse effects on health to the use of chemicals is extremely difficult.

Pesticides in Viet Nam: Widening abuse

The ever-widening use of agrochemicals, especially pesticides, attests to the limited extent to which the legislative efforts have reached the populace while the Vietnamese economy continues to improve.

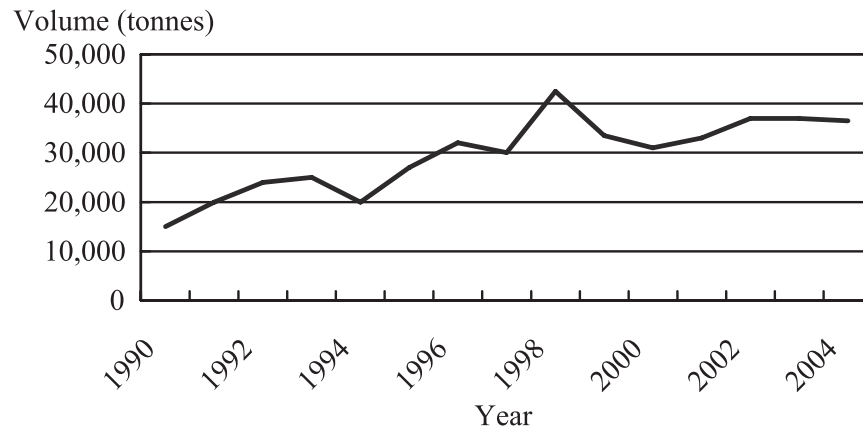


Figure 8.2 Volume of pesticides (in finished form) imported into Viet Nam, 1990–2002

Source: Dao (2002); Ngo (2005) cited in Pham (2006).

Scope and nature of abuse

Statistical data show the increasing trend of pesticides being imported into Viet Nam, from around 15,000 tonnes in 1990 to more than 36,000 tonnes in 2002 (fig. 8.2). These figures do not include illegally imported pesticides, which account for roughly 30 per cent of the total volume used. The average volume of pesticides used per hectare of agricultural crops increased more than 100 per cent from 1990 to 1999 (Dao, 2002; Ngo et al., 2001). Parallel to these, new varieties of pesticides and new pesticide companies have also increased noticeably in recent years despite the stricter regulations on pesticide imports, registration, production, distribution, and use presented above. For instance, on average 41 new pesticides were registered per year in the period 1997–2001, and this figure jumped to 110 in the period 2002–2006. The number of new pesticide companies legally established during the same period (1997–2006) increased from 137 to 193 (MARD, cited in Pham, 2006).

In addition to these quantitative indications of the increase, we need to call attention to the qualitative aspects of the use of pesticides. According to Nguyen M. Quang (2001), roughly one-third of the insecticides imported into Viet Nam are considered highly toxic. In another study (Pham, Duc, and Nguyen, 1995), nearly 80 per cent of finished products are in the form of insecticides. The main products used are organophosphates (Basudin, Methamidophos, Methylparathion), carbamates (Bassa, Saturn, Furadan), pyrethroids (Decis, Cypermethrin), organochlorines (Lindane, 2,4-D), and salts (copper sulphate, zinc phosphide).

Extremely hazardous and banned pesticides are still widely found in local markets, and the use of pesticides in farming practices often does not follow the guidelines issued by the central government (Nguyen M. Quang, 2001). The examples include Ceresan, a compound produced from mercury, DDT, Methylparathion, and Methamidophos among those found to be used by vegetable-growing farmers (Dao, 2002). In 1999 phosphate- and carbamate-based pesticides still accounted for 41.6 per cent and 32.2 per cent of the total pesticides imported into Viet Nam, respectively. It is true that imports of more environmentally safe pyrethroid and newly produced pesticides are increasing; yet they still account only for 22.2 per cent and 3.9 per cent of the total, respectively, as of 1999 (ibid.).

The distribution of pesticides also reveals the limited effects of the legislative efforts, illustrating the depth of the problem. There were about 19,000 shops involved in pesticide trading and 39 companies involved in processing/packaging pesticides in Viet Nam in 2000. However, an inspection conducted in the same year by the Department of Plant Protection of 10,233 pesticide shops found that 2,388 shops (23.4 per cent) had no permission to sell pesticides, 8,868 shop owners (86.7 per cent) had no pesticide handling certificates, and 50 per cent of the shops had no adequate pesticide storage facility (Nguyen and Dao, 2002). Illegal pesticide trading (mainly of highly toxic pesticides) is far from marginal. The 2000 nationwide inspection also uncovered 2,500 kg of banned pesticides, and 4,753 litres and 5,645 kg of illegally imported pesticides (Dasgupta et al., 2005; Nguyen and Dao, 2002). In 2002 the department found 1,600 bottles of Methamidophos imported from China in Donganh, Hanoi, and 2 tonnes in Hung Yen province (*Lao Dong*, 2002).

Users, too, are blamed for much of the abuse. Recent studies confirm that the pesticides used on rice have been reduced, partly because the low market price for rice discourages farmers from investing more in rice production. The more recent dissemination of so-called integrated pest management (IPM) for rice, where use of pesticides constitutes merely one of a variety of methods, may have dissuaded farmers from exclusively relying on pesticides (Nguyen Van Linh, 2001). However, outside the rice-growing farmers there has been a tendency towards the increasing application of cheaper and more hazardous pesticides (Pham et al., 1995; Van Mele, Nguyen, and van Huis, 2001). The tendency is noticeable among farmers of cash crops, especially vegetables, who are facing numerous pests, many of which have become more resistant to a wide range of pesticides.

Owing to characteristics of being more vulnerable to pest and disease, vegetables are observed as receiving the highest volume of pesticide application. For instance, in the Red River Delta the average amount of

Table 8.1 Pesticide expenditure and uses, 1990–1991

Country/region	Expenditure (US\$/ha)	Number of pesticide spraying times per crop
China	26.6	3.5
India	24.9	2.4
Philippines	26.1	2.0
Indonesia	7.7	2.2
Northern Viet Nam	22.3	1.0
Southern Viet Nam	29.3	5.3

Source: Nguyen et al. (2003).

pesticides used per hectare on vegetables is 5.52 kg, on rice 3.34 kg, on short-growing industrial crops 3.34 kg, on long-growing industrial crops 3.08 kg, and on other food crops 0.88 kg (Dao, 2002). This tendency is also found in other regions of Viet Nam. Farmers in the Mekong Delta had more pesticide spraying times per crop and a higher share for pesticides out of the total production cost than farmers in other Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia (table 8.1; see table 8.2 for the regional breakdown of pesticide use within Viet Nam). Specifically, in our recent survey in one intensive vegetable-farming area in Hai Duong province, the share of money spent on pesticides out of the total vegetable production cost was up to 40 per cent.

Finally, the limited effect of legislative efforts on farmers is best evidenced by their willing disregard of the regulations and instructions for the use of the chemicals (Nguyen and Dao, 2002). This may be attributed to farmers' strong but misplaced conviction that the losses caused by pests and diseases are often far higher than the real losses. Besides this, farmers lack information and knowledge on the economic justifications of pesticide use and the sustainable alternatives of pest management, such as variety selection, crop rotation, crop diversification, and irrigation.

In a recent survey in two villages of Donganh district, Hanoi, 75 per cent of the farmers used fungicides periodically and had shortened pesticide application intervals, two to four days, under highly humid conditions (Nguyen et al., 2004), which is a much shorter interval than is recommended. Highly toxic pesticides and those of unknown origins – thus of questionable quality – are still accessed and used by farmers for vegetables in these villages, accounting for roughly 10 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, of the entire volume used (fig. 8.3).

Most farmers often combine two to five types of pesticides for use at one time. They also use very high dosages and spray many more times throughout a harvest season than is recommended. For instance, in a survey farmers were found to spray 20 to 30 times per cabbage crop

Table 8.2 Use of pesticides in different regions of Viet Nam

Region	Insecticide		Fungicide		Herbicide		Total (m tonnes) %	
	Quantity (m tonnes)	%	Quantity (m tonnes)	%	Quantity (m tonnes)	%		
Red River Delta	2,846	13.2	1,315	11.4	297	4.3	4,438	22.7
Northeast	2,334	10.8	1,315	6.9	155	2.3	3,504	10.0
Northwest	364	1.6	10	0.3	0	0	464	1.0
North Central	1,432	6.6	551	3.2	85	1.2	2,068	5.5
Central Coast	1,525	7.1	385	2.2	350	5.2	2,252	5.9
Highland	873	4.0	249	0.4	185	2.6	1,307	3.5
Southeast	2,354	11.0	1,230	3.3	597	8.7	4,181	11.2
Mekong River Delta	9,878	45.7	4,427	40.0	5,189	75.5	19,404	51.2

Source: Nguyen and Nguyen (2007: 141).

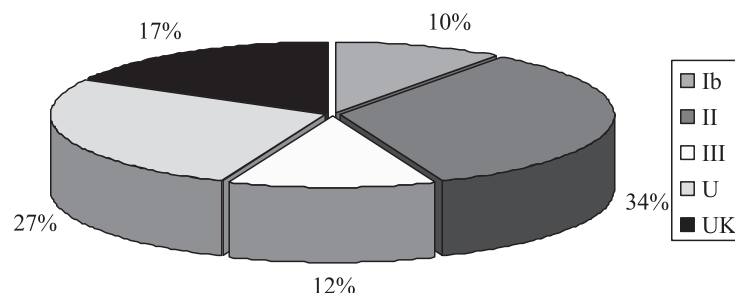


Figure 8.3 Proportions of the 22 most frequently used pesticides in 2 villages in Donganh, Hanoi

Note: Ib = highly hazardous; II = moderately hazardous; III = slightly hazardous; U = unlikely to present an acute hazard in normal use; UK = unknown origins.

Source: Pham (2006).

(Nguyen et al., 2003), far more than recommended. The farmers, so concerned with sales of their products, often have only a short pre-harvest pesticide application interval to keep the good appearance of their vegetables to attract consumers in the markets, and they do this without adequate attention to safety.

The abuse is not only limited to the actual use of the chemicals. What to do with the used or remaining pesticide is an integral part of pesticides abuse. A survey among 480 farmers in the south uncovered the astonishing practice that nearly 95 per cent disposed of any remaining pesticides by pouring them into nearby canals or ditches. They may also try to get rid of them by spraying crops other than the targeted ones (Dasgupta et al., 2005; Nguyen et al., 2003).

The legislative efforts by the government notwithstanding, these abusive pesticide practices make the contamination more formidable and serious for the farmers, for the food they produce, and for the overall environment.

Impact of pesticides: Food, water, human health, and environment

Decades of pesticide abuse, including banned substances such as DDT and Methamidophos, have broadly contaminated Vietnamese living conditions. Even a brief scan of the surveys and investigations reveals the seriousness and scope of the contamination.

Nguyen M. Quang (2001) cites two studies, one by Dr Hisato Iwata et al. and the other by Dr Arnold Schecter, where even the banned DDT

found its way to the fields and the human body. The former found the airborne levels of DDT in Viet Nam to be “2–3 orders of magnitude higher than those in Japan, the U.S. and some parts of Europe”. The latter found levels of 4,220–7,300 ppb of p,p'-DDT in samples of human breast milk gathered from 12 women from the south of Viet Nam. DDT and other chemicals such as PCBs, Hexachlorocyclohexane isomers, Aldrin, and Dieldrin insecticides were also found in animal fat, butter, meat, and seafood samples taken from several locations in Viet Nam (ibid.).

Cash crops, especially vegetables, are the real suspects for contamination; and they carry the contaminants beyond the farmers. High pesticide residues are found among marketed products. More than 28 per cent of vegetable samples collected from markets in Hanoi had pesticide residues that were two to six times higher than the maximum residue level (MRL) (Tran and To, 2002). Specifically, in a test conducted by the Northern Pesticide Control Centre (PCC) in 2001, Methamidophos residues were found in 7.9 per cent of the total sample of water spinach. More seriously, of the samples with pesticide residues, some had residues 50 times higher than the standard (e.g. Trichlorfon 11.21 mg/kg of *cari*; Methamidophos 16.3 mg/kg of water spinach).² Similarly, Methamidophos was found at more than 24 and 50 times higher than the MRL given by the FAO in cabbages and leafy onions, respectively, in a market in Ho Chi Minh City (Nguyen et al., 2003). Pesticide residues that are higher than the MRLs are also detected even on so-called safe vegetables.

Given these indications of contaminated food, human health is at an immensely high risk. In 1993–1994 there were about 600 cases of pesticide poisoning allegedly due to eating contaminated vegetables (ibid.). The trend of food poisoning through contaminated food has never ceased to increase. In 1998, out of 23,000 people with food poisoning, 6,500 were related to pesticides. In 2002, in 37 out of the 61 provinces, more than 7,000 cases (involving 7,647 people) of food poisoning by pesticide residues were reported, causing 277 deaths (Nguyen, 2003). The situation seems to be worsening, as it was recently revealed by one medical official that “the rate of acute food poisoning in Vietnam is 80/100,000 inhabitants. Annually, there are more than 66,000 people suffering from food poisoning.”³

At first glance these numbers appear to be still modest. However, if one were to take a WHO estimate seriously, the prevalence of the food poisoning is indeed alarming. There are 50 cases of poisoning for every case reported and registered (Dasgupta et al., 2005; Nguyen M. Quang, 2001; Vo, 2003). Given these obvious and hidden adverse effects of pesticides on human health, the economic cost of pesticide abuse is far from negligible and cannot be taken simply as a cost of producing larger

returns. The World Bank (2006) estimates the combined impacts on domestic human health of contaminated food-induced ailments and loss from forgone markets at \$700 million per year in Viet Nam.

Besides human health, pesticide use also endangers water quality and ecosystems in the fertile river deltas in northern and southern Viet Nam (Berg, 2001). For instance, pesticide use in agriculture has led to a drastic reduction in the population of aquatic life, and has had a significant effect on the population of soil organisms (Hanoi Department of Science, Technology, and Environment, 1998, cited in Nguyen and Dao, 2002). Pesticides, for instance, have led to a loss of species, changes in food webs, and an increase of algal biomass (Van den Brink, 1999; Van den Brink et al., 2003). A 2004 survey in Donganh district, Hanoi, noted farmers' reports on the visible deaths of aquatic animals such as fish, crabs, and frogs in agricultural fields and ditches after pesticide sprays or cleaning of spraying equipment (Nguyen et al., 2004). Similarly, in the Mekong Delta it is feared that the overuse of chemicals to kill a plague of snails has led to widespread contamination and damage to the water quality.⁴ In a study by Pham, Duc, and Nguyen (1995), the quantity of pesticides in improperly treated wastewater in major industrial sectors discharged to rivers amounted to up to 25 tonnes per year. This contributes to the reduction of the quality of water even in major rivers such as the Mekong and Red Rivers. Dissolved oxygen in the rivers passing through urban areas such as Hanoi, Haiphong, and Viet Tri is at levels that will be detrimental to fish. Biological oxygen demand volume in canals near these urban centres was 2.5–2.7 times higher than the EU standards for surface water intended for drinking purposes. The number of coliform bacteria amounted to 300–7,000 units/100 ml.

Moreover, pesticides may reach groundwater and pollute (future) drinking-water resources (van Wijk et al., 2004). Though there is still controversy regarding the sources of water pollution that causes serious health problems to farmers, pesticides can be taken to be an important one. The evidence is sporadic, but is dramatic enough to serve as a general warning.

Chien Thang village (Vinh Loc commune, Can Loc district, Ha Tinh province) has 40 households. From 1999 to 2003, 15 people had cancer, nine of whom died. In August 2002, medical staff examined 47 randomly chosen people – all of whom had cardiovascular and arterial diseases. Mr Ngon's family has six members and all of them have nerve-system-related ailments. The cause of these illnesses is believed to be contamination from tonnes of DDT and BHC that in 1967 were stored in a [temporary] house built in the village. Without adequate attention and management, the house was damaged and the pesticides leaked into groundwater which was the main source of water used for drinking and bathing by the local people. (Vo, 2003)

A similar warning comes from Hong Son village (Duc Thanh commune) and Ao Mu Rua village (Lang Thanh commune) in Yen Thanh district, Nghe An province, with scores of deaths and many others plagued by cancer as a result of pesticide-contaminated groundwater.⁵ According to one medical official, 80 per cent of people's health problems in Viet Nam have been caused by polluted water, and each day about 25,000 people are hospitalized due to diseases related to polluted water.⁶

Within the last 30 years, 40 new diseases have emerged in Viet Nam that are mainly caused by the polluted environment.⁷ Soil has not escaped the contamination. Studies conducted to measure pesticide residue in soil have brought about emergency calls for government and public awareness. In some locations in Hoa Son commune DDT is found in soil at a concentration 9,000 times higher than the allowed standard of 0.1 mg/kg. A large quantity of DDT had contaminated the soil as far down as a depth from 0.5 m to 2 m, and even deeper in some locations. The case of this commune may be something of an anomaly, as human neglect led to the soil pollution. Nonetheless, the case is one of many caused by human neglect or errors in handling agrochemicals, including toxic pesticides:

Since 1965–1966, in Hoa Son commune (Do Luong District, Nghe An Province) there existed an agricultural materials store, later called the Plant Protection Pesticides' Store (PPP Store). This store has been used for many years to keep many kinds of pesticide, but during the American War the PPP store was damaged and was never repaired. After the war, the conditions worsened with damages to the roofs, doors, and windows. And no-one used it anymore. For nearly 30 years the pesticides saved in this store penetrated deep into the soil and flowed freely causing a serious contamination to a large area of land in Hoa Son commune.⁸

Conclusions

Though there is still controversy regarding the real cost of pesticides to human health and the environment, it is clear that they do not benefit humans and the environment in either direct or indirect exposure. Pesticides, from their first use in Viet Nam at the end of the 1950s, have been promoted by the government and increasingly used by farmers. For farmers, pesticides are seen as a necessary means to increase agricultural production for both domestic use and sale. For the central government, pesticides are viewed as essential to multiply agricultural production to sustain economic growth, which in turn takes Viet Nam out of the ranks

of the poorest nations. With this seeming consensus between government and populace, the use of agrochemicals, especially pesticides, has increased at an alarming pace since the decollectivization of agricultural production in the middle of the 1980s.

Scientific evidence suggests the linkages between dermal, neurological, and respiratory ailments and toxic substances in pesticides. However, the evidence of contracting these ailments is not sufficiently strong or apparent in the eyes of farmers to dissuade them from using the chemicals or persuade them to use them with far more caution.

Lack of education among the farmers *is* probably the most significant factor influencing their continued use of pesticides. Dissemination of information concerning the working days lost to pesticide-induced ailments may encourage the farmers to take a more cautious approach to the use of chemicals. An appeal to use other means such as crop rotation or insect-resistant varieties – that is, adoption of so-called integrated pest management (Saito, 2007) – may lessen the fear among farmers that their productivity might decline.

However, education of the farmers has a formidable, and ironic, enemy in economic growth and all the benefits that it is supposed to bring. The farmers in Viet Nam, unfettered from collectivized methods of production, have all the responsibilities of making sure that their labour brings in what is due them. They hope to mobilize and invest the means and resources, especially land, at their disposal since the late 1980s to secure life. Higher agricultural yield, better sales of products, and more income act as powerful incentives. Against these, the risks that the use of chemicals poses are at best “accidental”. After all, some of the symptoms of pesticide contamination, such as headaches, dizziness, or fatigue, may mimic common sickness – so much so that even local clinic staff may fail to recognize the links between the use of chemicals and ailments.

In other words, the real problem may lie in the fact that the majority of farmers confront two different issues, one of which is far more certain than the other: the use of chemicals producing tangible results, and the potential or “accidental” health threats from the use of chemicals. The very process of economic growth that is supposed to liberate people from one kind of human insecurity, poverty, ironically exposes them to another kind of insecurity, threat to human health. It is symbolic that the farmers who are well informed of the poisoning risks of pesticide use still disregard protective equipment, “because it is an obstacle to their work” (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2007: 145). According to the World Health Organization (Jeyaratnam, 1990: 140), nearly 20,000 deaths (including suicides) due to pesticide exposure are reported worldwide, the great majority of which are in developing countries. The toll may be much higher if we include the number of unreported deaths.

Chemical contamination of the living environment and its human cost have accompanied Viet Nam's economic growth, and are an illustration of the human insecurity V-curve that Professor Umegaki suggests in the introductory chapter in this volume. The effort to end this V-curve has to begin without delay. This may not mean that the state and the farmers have to sacrifice their economic interest to an ecological one. Rather, they need to be aware that both economic and ecological interests can be achieved simultaneously without one excluding the other. Scientific knowledge on pest management and ecological concerns needs to be incorporated into policy-making processes and daily farming practices in order to reform the use of pesticides.⁹ For this to be achieved, more democratic processes should be promoted and information governance needs to be further improved. Here, all relevant actors will have access to information sources and will create dialogue, including policy-makers, based on what they have learned and the adjustments they have made themselves. The key information and message in all of this are obvious: sustained human health is an integral part of economic growth.

Though the cost brought about by improper pesticide use to both human health and the environment has not been well studied and documented in Viet Nam, what has been presented above gives an unpleasant view of the threats in Viet Nam to human security, safety, and welfare for future generations if the situation remains unchecked and unchanged. In order to change this view, a combination of state action and individual action is needed. The state needs to reform itself into a more effective and more human-security-conscious apparatus. Individuals need to become better aware of the consequences of pesticide abuse. Farmers need to be self-regulated for their own longer-term agricultural productivity, and consumers need to become active participants in the process of and demand for safe food crops by using their pocketbook power and showing their preference for safe fruit and vegetables when they buy them.

Notes

1. See www.congan.com.vn/detail_news.php?a=art03606&timkiem=thu?c%20tr?%20sâu&highlight=noidung.
2. See www.ppd.gov.vn/tapsanbvtv/2005/So2/Bai%207.htm.
3. See www.dantri.com.vn/Sukien/2006/2/99945.vip.
4. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1155787.stm>.
5. See www.tienphongonline.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=32177&ChannelID=2; www.congan.com.vn/detail_news.php?a=art03606&timkiem=thu?c%20tr?%20sâu&highlight=noidung.
6. See www.tienphongonline.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=64869&ChannelID=46.
7. See <http://www9.dantri.com.vn/Sukien/2006/10/148240.vip>.

8. See www.vnnews.com/coci/ginc/pesticide%20risk.htm.
9. For instance, to a certain extent pesticides are not the solution, but rather a cause of some of the recent outbreaks of pests and diseases in agriculture. Thus dependence on pesticides as the dominant means of controlling pests and diseases is not a durable and ecologically and economically proper solution (www.nrdc.org/health/farming/fields/execsum.asp).

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9

Creating a community: Ageing in urban Japan

Daisuke Watanabe

Introduction

On the rolling hills not far from the famous Enoshima beach southwest of Tokyo, farmers produce vegetables and fruit and raise cows and pigs for domestic consumption. The soil is characteristically black or dark brown from the ash from Mount Fuji, which stands north of the hills. There are low trees that offer needed shade during the summer and a barrier against the freezing wind from the mountains during the winter. Hundreds of narrow paths criss-cross the hills, allowing farmers access to their small plots of farmland.

Tucked in under one of these clumps of trees is the site of a “charcoal-making club” for dozens of retired workers, most of whom are over 65 years of age and were not, during their working lives, the farmers who live nearby.¹ There is nothing remarkable about the complex, a 200 square metre establishment on 2,000 square metres of land surrounded by hundreds of tall bamboos, among other things. The Takesumi (bamboo charcoal) Club was initiated spontaneously and has been maintained voluntarily by the retirees. The members seek no financial compensation or reward for what they do. What they do *is* the compensation and reward, which all of Japan’s social policies for the elderly combined still cannot offer. Here the members find more than simply what they are entitled to receive from the national and local governments as citizens over 65 years old. Creating and sustaining a community of their own, with such intangible returns as “time” that is meaningfully spent, is something

*Human insecurity in East Asia, Umegaki, Thiesmeyer, and Watabe (eds),
United Nations University Press, 2009, ISBN 978-92-808-1164-3*

that escapes the dominant thinking of policy-makers concerned with the “welfare” of the elderly *and* the rising cost for a population of elderly that will soon reach an astonishing 25 per cent of the entire population of Japan.

The aim of this chapter is to examine how older Japanese people identify and fulfil some of their *daily needs* after retirement, needs to which an impressive array of government policies designed for them still cannot adequately respond. They are the kind of needs, however, which keep the daily life of the elderly on a stable footing. Failure to fulfil these needs exposes them to a kind of insecure life for which they have never prepared before retirement.

The case for examination is this Takesumi Club outside Fujisawa city, one of the main suburbs of the Tokyo-Yokohama-Kawasaki metropolitan area. Through a description of the processes by which the club was created and has been sustained, I would like to address a broader question: how the elderly in Japan *after retirement* are negotiating their way through various sorts of constraints. Retirement is in and of itself often a traumatic experience for many. However, what follows retirement could be paralysing, as it forces abrupt changes in lifestyle and even re-evaluation of the previously unquestioned experiences that people have had through their careers.

In contemporary Japan the majority of the elderly are entitled to receive some form of public support. The examples of such support are various: the national pension system that was instituted to provide universal pension coverage; a reduction of medical expenses; long-term care insurance (*kaigo hoken*); and various types of public senior carehomes, among others.

However, these measures, extensive as they are, do come with some serious problems. The increasing financial cost is one such problem. As is well known, Japan has been rapidly ageing. The population aged 65 years old or older is predicted to reach 26 per cent of the entire population by 2015, and about 30 per cent in 2030 (NIPSSR, 2002). There are going to be even more elderly, and at the same time the proportion of younger people continues to shrink. In other words, not only the net cost of supporting the elderly increases but also the sense of inequality between the elderly beneficiaries of these programmes and the current working generation upon whom the brunt of the financial burden falls. The foundation of the social security system for the elderly may quickly erode.

The preoccupation of specialists on the elderly has become, therefore, how to reconcile the two obvious facts: one, that the elderly in Japan cannot lead their everyday lives without public and other support; and two, that the increasing costs are undermining the system of public support for

the elderly. There may be one more obvious fact as well – the unquestioned belief among the specialists on the elderly that the current system, which is in line with the constitutional requirement for providing Japan's citizens with the minimum conditions for an acceptable life, can best meet the elderly's needs only on the condition that its financial foundations remain sound.

Given this backdrop, prevalent in social gerontology, the specialists' concern has been the establishment of a basis for "cost-efficient" policies for the elderly.² The "problems and needs" of the elderly are thus derived from such attributes as their ailments, age, and the size of their household, among other things, which enables policy-makers to generate a set of "problems of the elderly". These are subsequently classified according to primary categories such as age, health, income and its sources, and household size. The idea behind this and similar efforts is to identify the problems and needs that are *common* to as many elderly as possible, which may lead to "cost-efficient" policies, i.e. those with the largest possible number of perceived beneficiaries.

These efforts, however, have had some unexpected effects. For one, it is now mainly these categories and the variations within them that define the "elderly". Thus any discussion of the "elderly" has become a discussion of the "costs" of supporting them financially. Another effect is that some of the "needs" of the elderly may not fit into any of these categories. A salient example addressed below is the need for "space and time" that could replace the old "workplace and working hours". The "workplace and working hours", for retirees, meant more than mere "space and time" utilized and spent while employed. While they were employed, space and time generated above all the source of livelihood: income. They also received non-financial rewards for their work, such as due recognition, and sustained a certain sense of community in pursuit of common goals like achieving a high job performance. And workplace space and time create a much-needed rhythm to life.

As such, the loss of the workplace and working hours means an immense void in the lives of many retirees. The workplace and working hours, and everything else that goes with them, are something that social security policies for the elderly as such cannot readily replace. The focus of this chapter is this void, and how the elderly confront it on their own initiative.

Ageing in urban Japan

I would like to start with a brief overview of ageing in urban and suburban Japan, which has received relatively less attention compared to

Table 9.1 Ageing in rural and urban Japan as percentage of total population, 1970–2030

Year	% of total population	Urban areas % (1,000)	Rural areas % (1,000)	Tokyo metropolitan area %
1970	7.1	6.2 (4,642)	9.3 (2,689)	5.2
1975	7.9	7.0 (5,967)	10.8 (2,898)	5.9
1980	9.1	8.2 (7,313)	12.0 (3,334)	7.7
1985	10.3	9.1 (8,698)	13.4 (3,770)	8.9
1990	12.1	11.0 (10,507)	15.7 (4,387)	10.5
1995	14.5	13.3 (13,080)	18.8 (5,181)	13.0
2000	17.3	16.1 (16,107)	21.8 (5,899)	15.8
2005	20.1	19.5 (21,463)	24.0 (4,209)	NA
2015	26.0	25.5 (NA)	28.8 (NA)	NA
2030	29.6	29.1 (NA)	33.1 (NA)	NA

Source: National Census (1970–2005); NIPSSR (2002).

ageing in rural Japan. One reason for this relative lack of attention may be the fact that, taken as a percentage of the entire population, ageing in urban Japan has remained slower and smaller than that of rural Japan during most of the post-war decades (table 9.1). Another, more convincing, reason could be that ageing in rural Japan has been at the core of a series of other problems since the early 1960s, long before ageing itself became a key policy issue for Japan.

Post-war economic recovery and growth from the 1950s to the 1970s stimulated an unprecedented urbanization in Japan as cities offered all sorts of employment opportunities in the secondary and tertiary sectors for young Japanese. The same development, consequently, removed a large portion of the younger population from rural communities. The ageing process in rural Japan, in other words, is due as much to the depletion of younger Japanese in the villages as to the extended life expectancy and declining birth rate that accompanied post-war modernization nearly everywhere. These demographic changes have left abandoned farmlands and houses and unmanaged forests across Japan. Known as *kasoka*, literally “an excessive depletion”, the depletion of the younger population that accompanied ageing in rural Japan means undermining the whole basis of communal life.³ The news coverage of numerous urban youth and medical volunteers helping the elderly in remote, “depopulated” communities has spread the image of rural Japan in decay. The estimates of “lost economic values” derived, for example, from wasted forestry resources heightened the sense of alarm as resource-poor Japan continued to rely on imports of natural resources, including lumber.

By contrast, ageing in urban Japan has gone almost unnoticed until recently, partially because it is taking place in vibrant metropolises and cities. The urban landscape has shown no prominent visible signs of “ageing”. The decaying image of rural Japan has thus escaped many Japanese, the great majority of whom are urbanites.

Nonetheless, the combination of several factors has gradually shifted attention from rural to urban Japan as regarding the ageing problem. There is, for one thing, the sheer number of elderly over 65 in urban Japan, which has now reached over 20 million. In response, many urbanites and suburbanites have begun noticing the construction of numerous “elderly” homes subtly but surely changing their neighbourhood landscapes. For another, the first post-war baby-boomers, popularly referred to as *dankai*, have begun to reach the mandatory retirement age, which in most areas and places of employment is between 60 and 65. The great majority of these baby-boomers, who were born during the post-war recovery period and are the major actors and beneficiaries of the “miraculous” growth of the 1960s, are typically urbanites. These baby-boomers, the largest age cohort, began to dominate the city streets and residential complexes as soon as they became adults.

Finally, the prolonged economic recession throughout the 1990s, the “lost decade”, played a decisive role in alerting policy-makers to the serious financial threat posed by the arrival on the scene of the numerous retirees who were the first post-war baby-boomers. As Japan’s economic performance continued to show no signs of improvement during that decade, the attention inevitably shifted to the question of how to ensure the stable livelihood of, and the financial resources for, this large bloc of urban and suburban voters.

No matter what the cause(s) of the shift in attention from rural to urban ageing, one point of caution may be in order. A closer look at the elderly in urban Japan reveals more than what aggregate data such as the percentage of the population over 65 may suggest. There are some elderly who reside in mixed, i.e. multigenerational, residential communities or with their younger in-laws. Then there are those living in neighbourhoods where the majority of residents are close to or beyond retirement age. The former may have a sort of cushion in absorbing the impacts of retirement and an abrupt discontinuity in their lives, as they are surrounded by neighbours of various generations or in-laws who may offer needed assistance or companionship. The latter, however, are concentrated in what are known as the “new towns”, the huge residential developments in and around Tokyo, Yokohama, and Kawasaki that were built in response to the gigantic influx of people from rural Japan during the high economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s (Oda, 1997; Miura, 1999). For them, one suspects, the discontinuity after retirement may be more

absolute. Also, there are some whose financial security was well established long before retirement due to their savings, better pension, or clever investments while employed; while for others financial security can be sustained only by a piecemeal approach of putting together part-time jobs to supplement the main stable source of income such as the national pension. The problems and needs of the elderly in urban Japan, derived not only from what they are but also from how they live, are thus immensely diverse.

In response to the urbanization of the 1960s and 1970s, the cities and their surrounding suburbs enhanced services of various kinds. In the first place, the large-scale housing development projects were accompanied by the most updated infrastructure of their time. Urban and suburban residents began enjoying easy access to goods and services through, for example, convenience stores, the first of which appeared in the Greater Tokyo area in 1974, in just about every neighbourhood in urban and suburban Japan (table 9.2). The government decision in 2000 to revise the Large-scale Retail Stores Law allowed large-scale supermarkets and shopping malls to make inroads into urban and suburban markets, multiplying the ease with which residents could purchase daily commodities and durable consumer products. Individual homes are no exception as a “market” for these and similar services. Housecleaning and even catering for daily meals have become part of the urban and suburban amenities.

Cities and suburbs have also prepared some amenities that are *specifically* for the elderly. New public facilities come with special access for the wheelchair-bound. Some municipal governments began issuing “senior passes” so that the elderly could enjoy free or discounted access to various social services such as public transportation. Other localities have built and maintained a kind of “commons” or public space for the elderly within many of their districts. No doubt these and other services, often viewed as the elderly’s prerogatives, help facilitate elderly residents’ transition from an active career life to a life of some degree of ease and tranquillity. Given this rapidly changing and diversified living environment, it is particularly inappropriate to speak of the elderly as a single, and uniform, group, a practice that once dominated the minds of many concerned with “old” people (Bytheway, 1995; Palmore, 1999). Yet, as we shall see below, the new amenities also bring with them a new way of homogenizing the elderly into one or more general categories.

City life, viewed in light of this diffusion of amenities, has come to depend on a massive network of minutely specialized services. Food caterers, housecleaners, caregivers, transporters, doctors and healthcare workers, and financial consultants are but a few of the service providers that have emerged from, and sustained, this growing network (Wirth, 1938; Kurasawa, 1977; Morioka, 2000). However, there is an irony to

Table 9.2 Transition of number of establishments in retailing industry, 1982–2004*

Year	Department store	GMS**	SMS***	Convenience store	Drugstore	Specialized store	Small-size general store
1982	461	1,507	5,495	23,235	NA	1,093,601	534,817
1985	438	1,634	5,873	29,236	NA	1,004,883	523,469
1988	433	1,851	6,397	34,550	NA	1,007,756	511,675
1991	478	1,683	20,827	23,837	NA	1,009,061	468,399
1994	463	1,804	25,171	28,226	NA	930,143	427,099
1997	476	1,888	32,209	36,631	NA	839,969	385,748
1999	394	1,670	33,381	39,561	NA	921,801	318,161
2002	362	1,668	37,035	41,770	14,664	775,847	361,470
2004	308	1,675	36,220	42,738	13,095	726,825	358,297

Notes:

* Old definition in 1982–1988, new definition created in 1991.

** General merchandise store.

*** Specialized merchandise store.

Source: SSDSSTI (1982–2004).

this enrichment of urban and suburban amenities. Individuals are relieved of time-consuming daily chores and benefit from the increased time at their disposal, and the elderly are no exception to this. But there is one difference. From the point of view of the elderly, especially retirees, time is already abundant, perhaps too much so.

There is another irony as well. This network grows and operates principally on a "demand-supply" basis. In other words, demand for services alone is not sufficient to generate the pressure, or incentive, for continued supply. Thus the expansion of the network of specialized services has always been preceded by another process, that of marketing. In this instance, services are first considered for their marketability. Knowledge of the market weighs heavily in determining the needs that ought to be serviced. Services rendered publicly are no exception to this reversal between demand and supply. In place of "marketability", the budgetary considerations and preoccupation with cost-efficiency of any given policy are what determine the needs that are worth servicing. Those needs for which the services are not "marketable" nor amenable to a cost-efficient policy do not, in the policy framework, exist.

This reversal leads to a final irony. Given some physical or other disadvantage, the elderly may increase their reliance on these services. However, deprived of the position of defining their own needs themselves, the elderly are alienated, in a manner much like Marx's "working class", from what they are. The elderly in the current policy framework are not what they claim they are, but what the market-defined needs make them out to be. Easier access to the marketplace, cleaner homes, remedies for aching bodies, participation in social events, regular meals, or even occasional companionship are some of the needs that are now more easily fulfilled. This list stretches as far as the market or budgetary considerations permit. However, beyond the list lie other needs, however ambiguous, that touch upon the core of the lives of the elderly, especially retirees: the void that the losses of the "workplace" and work hours create.

Specialists on the elderly are, of course, keenly aware of the existence of needs that may not be fulfilled either by market mechanisms or by public policy. One effort to address this issue is to lump these indefinable, or unserviceable, needs together and call them the problem of *ikigai*, roughly the "value in living". *Ikigai*, or its absence, quickly became a popular term for characterizing the lives of the elderly. However, the term itself is utterly ambiguous and infinitely variable depending on who uses it. Consequently, the term is only something that defines *residually* what the expanding list of definable needs leaves out.

A close look reveals that an effort to specify what *ikigai* is will lead to two opposing, and unsustainable, arguments. One is the exaltation of highly autonomous individuals who find value in life in the very fact of

less dependence upon services rendered through market or public policy. *Ikigai* in this case is a privilege accessible mostly to those who can be agents, acting on their own *regardless* of their ages (Rose, 1996; Shibuya, 2003). The other is the emphasis upon the elderly as benefactors of tangible and intangible services to broader society. Social recognition in exchange for such services is what constitutes the “value in living”. A basic assumption of this view is that the elderly have something valuable to offer to society simply because they have lived a long time. It is a kind of paternalism underlying the earlier ideas of gerontology (Palmore, 1999). Either way, *ikigai*, a category invented specifically to identify the needs inherent in the lives of the elderly, turns out to be much too inclusive to perform any defining function.⁴

Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on *what* the elderly do, or should, possess at the cost of examining *how* they acquire what they need. We may have been concerned too narrowly with what is available within the reach of the elderly. Consequently, we have *reconstructed* life for the elderly into one that is dictated by the services made available and the material resources enabling them to access them.

The question of *how* the elderly acquire what they need, on the other hand, prompts us to place their lives in a much more dynamic context. This shift to *how* is one way of re-examining this reconstructed life for the elderly. Instead of asking “What is available within the reach of the elderly?”, we ask “What can the elderly make available to themselves within their own reach?”

Creating a community: The elderly in an interactive life

The research subject on which I apply this shift in thinking as an analytical approach, during the period of December 2005–July 2007, is a local association, the Takesumi Club, which I chose for the following reasons. First, the Takesumi Club is a “group activity” that a group of retirees formed spontaneously. There are many private and public local organizations in the area that promote group activities or various causes for residents. I needed to find a case where such outside influences were either limited or non-existent in order to evaluate the internal drive of the members for group activities. The daily actions of the club, I hope, will enable us to observe how the interactions among the members change them and their thinking in relative isolation from activities or organizations formed “for” them. Second, the club has concentrated its activities within its own site, and has not spread around various other sites. I felt that the impact of the group activities, concentrated in one site, would be easier to evaluate.⁵

*The Takesumi Club**The club*

The northern outskirts of the city of Fujisawa, where the club operates, has long been an agricultural region. However, there are hundreds of small, medium, and large-scale factories housed in nearby industrial complexes. Some of these belong to well-known manufacturers such as Isuzu, IBM, and Fuji Xerox, and many other factories in the area are their subcontractors. Mostly established in the 1960s and early 1970s, these plants relocated a large number of workers and their families from elsewhere. More importantly, after a few decades these factories began to produce a large group of retirees.

Coincidentally, Mr EK, 64 years old, has been a full-time farmer all his life and owns a large bamboo forest in the rolling hills of this area. One concern for this ageing farmer was the maintenance of his bamboo forest, which has been handed down through many generations. Having only daughters, Mr EK was having difficulty finding someone to take over the farm after him: “My primary concern was the maintenance of the bamboo forest.”⁶ But he needed an extra incentive to offer if he was to rely on help from others.

He and his old friend Mr MF, a 70-year-old self-employed man, created a scheme: the promotion of bamboo charcoal production with volunteer help from outside the farm. Bamboo products such as charcoal and vinegar had been gaining attention and popularity among the health and environmentally conscious city residents since the late 1980s. Mr EK had an additional reason: “Farmers don’t retire. But I am already passing the normal retirement age. I want to remain active with people who are equally active until I cease to be able to do so. That’s how we started all of this.”

There was nothing remarkable about the beginning of the club. Mr TY, a 64-year-old man who had retired from a nearby factory, and the first contact Mr MF made, recalls: “One day, Mr MF asked me if I would be interested in picking bamboo shoots. I didn’t even know how to pluck them out of the ground. And he just said, we’ll see.” Mr MF took him to one of the bamboo forests. After pulling a few bamboo shoots out of the ground, Mr MF asked if he knew anything about bamboo charcoal. “I’ve seen it” was Mr TY’s answer, and “Okay, let’s try it” was Mr MF’s response. These three became the founders of the Takesumi Club, and their initial encounter took place in the spring of 2004.

The beginning was not without some incidents. One occasion that the members of the club fondly remember is the death of a plum tree, known for producing good-quality pickled plums. Mr YM, a 70-year-old retiree from a nearby factory, recalls:

Table 9.3 Members of the Takesumi Club

Age	Male	Female	Experience of retirement
49 and under	4	2	0
50–59	1	5	0
60–69	15	3	14
70 and over	6	1	6

We needed a spot to experiment with making the bamboo charcoal, and we built the first kiln for it in Mr EK's yard. There was a great Japanese plum tree which Mr EK's wife had carefully taken care of. But the smoke from the kiln killed it. Oh, we hated making her upset. This tree, a Nankobai, was a great tree. Mrs EK has been, though, so nice and caring about our activities since. We can't say "no" to her on anything.

The Takesumi Club started officially in December 2005, and originally had 15 members. Through word of mouth, more members joined the club and now there are 37 (as of July 2007). Table 9.3 shows the composition of the club. Some who are still working but are approaching the mandatory retirement age join the club in order to "prepare" themselves for retirement.

Four days a month are set aside as "regular activity days". On any of the regular activity days 10–15 members show up. There are some who visit the site far more often than four days a month, even when there is no apparent chore to take care of. They come, invent things to do, and keep themselves busy during the visit. Others may ignore the site even during regular activity days, and make an appearance only for a party or some ceremony.

The Takesumi Club's main activities are the production and sale of bamboo charcoal, bamboo vinegar, and other bamboo products. In addition to these activities, they host a party periodically and participate in seasonal festivals in the neighbourhood. At the beginning, the Takesumi Club sold its products only at two nearby small shops. However, since it began selling at a new outlet store of a local agricultural cooperative in March 2006, the Takesumi Club has been enjoying strong sales. In fact, the store often sells out of all Takesumi products before closing time, generating pressure upon the club for more production. As a result, some members have recently tended to expand their production activities even beyond the regular activity days. All proceeds from sales go to cover the club's operational expenses, including investments in improvement of the facilities. The Takesumi Club has always been and remains a non-profit organization.

Members visit the site during all seasons; the Takesumi Club does not have a "fallow" period. The activities at the club can be broken down

to three rough stages: lumbering and cutting bamboo; burning the cut bamboo; and brushing and packing the charcoal. These stages require roughly 130, 120, and 400 person/workdays respectively. Activities are spread over two seasons: winter (mainly January to March) and the rest of the year. In the winter season, members prepare the bamboo to be burned as charcoal, lumbering enough bamboo to satisfy the needs both to collect their materials and to manage the forest. Then they cut the lumbered bamboo into evenly sized pieces. This preparation takes at least two or three months; in this period, they spend much less time burning the cut bamboo and making other products. The winter is best for this preparatory step because the lower humidity allows them to keep the cut bamboo free of mould. In the other seasons they produce bamboo charcoal by burning the cut bamboo in their kilns, and in this process the members also obtain bamboo vinegar as a by-product. Packing the bamboo charcoal after cleaning it with scrubbing brushes is the last leg in the whole process. The members undertake these tasks during most activity days. Finally, as explained below, the members engage in different kinds of work to produce thousands of by-products per year.

Before the club

D. Watanabe: How did you spend time for a half-year, after retirement?

Mr TY: Ah, I like to read books. And I have a seemingly unending amount of free time. I thought I would read a lot of books. Indeed, I did read books. That's what I thought. But if I only stay indoors, I give my family a lot of trouble, and I feel wretched. And, after a little, I watched baseball on television, I have gotten to know a lot about major league baseball. And then I became frightened and began to feel myself. Is this right? Okay? At the same time, I thought "indeed, human beings are *social*". And I'm not supposed to keep indoors, I have to go out. I know, many books and TV shows always say "Don't keep indoors! Go out!" But, where should I go ... It is a chance [to do something]. I say to myself, "that situation is not good", I think.

Here the recollection of Mr TY, one of the three founders of the club, living alone with his wife, uncovers a few points common to many retirees freed from the daily obligations of full-time work. Reading books, or whatever they do, in a "seemingly infinite amount of free time" is not really a waste of time. Mr TY's love of historical novels gave him pleasure: having read so much historical fiction, he "had fun pointing out factual errors by a tour guide" when he went on a travel package. But the issue is the "seemingly infinite" amount of time, which seems more infinite when the hobby of reading books consumes only its fragments.⁷

When "doing things" simply to kill an infinite amount of free time

becomes the insoluble problem, another set of problems with “doing things” becomes even more pronounced: how does one remain *social*, and where do such occasions make themselves available? Mr TY, like many others, says “Don’t stay indoors, go out!” is not really a solution to this set of problems. Where should he go so that he can feel social again and assured of his time being meaningfully consumed?

Around this time, about six months after retirement, he heard from his wife about the availability of a rental lot in a community vegetable garden near home. He rented it and began gardening in a tiny lot:

Mr TY: When I heard about that, I thought “Okay, I want to try that! It might be fine!” I didn’t think much of the gardening itself. I just wanted to do something with some purpose outside the house.

D. Watanabe: So, it looks more like you stumbled on to this than that you actively sought it ...

Mr TY: That’s right, that’s right. I was getting to have a chance and getting into such activities gradually. Through such experiences, that’s what people should be, social animals, I clearly have been perceiving such things. As it went on, and I experienced that I really enjoyed being with the local farmers, of whom I had had no knowledge, and was taught kindly by them, I thought, “I never knew the activities outside the home could be so much fun.” Not that I never trusted anyone outside, I always do have some close friends around.

Stepping outside the house with a purpose surpassed his expectations of what “doing things” with others might bring about. Doing things with others for a purpose was not new to him. He had taken it for granted in his pre-retirement phase. Yet Mr TY eagerly attributes this “unexpected” finding to his stepping outside the house. After a year of this initial project, he was ready to take further steps and took the initiative in founding the club. The craving for a meaningful way of consuming an infinite amount of free time, and for the relationships that the meaningful way of spending time generates, runs deep among Mr TY and many more like him.

For Mr TY, what he does at the site is unimportant. This is not unusual for those at the charcoal-producing site. They all had difficulty when I pressed the issue: “How do you characterize what you do in the club?” He responded, “Uh ... ahm ... hobby?”, followed after an interval by “Self-satisfaction?” Mr MO, a 65-year-old retiree living with his wife, had quite a bit of difficulty in coming up with a convincing answer. “I am just satisfied spending time here. I feel fine. I am not any trouble to others now.” There seems no prominent place in their minds for the main and official purpose of “producing charcoal” itself.

For Mr SI, a retiree aged 67, charcoal production also mattered less, as he recalled his initiation to the club in a halting way:

Mr SI: [after Mr MF suggested that he join the club] First, I went and check it. Honestly, I was not interested in bamboo charcoal. I was thinking I would be visiting everywhere after retirement. Besides, I thought, it'd be difficult to be part of a group targeted for something after [retirement]. Let me put it this way. The occasions to speak with someone will fade away ... Now I am retired, and I don't have to punch my timecard. Until [retirement], I worked like a bird in a cage. For the future, I wouldn't want to repeat that ... Still, I was thinking, I should look around everywhere and learn everything.

As he talked, he exhibited a certain distance from anything that reminded him of any organizational or institutional arrangement geared towards "high productivity". In its place, a craving for action, multiplied by the anxiety of having fewer "occasions to speak with others", loomed large. Mr HM, a 63-year-old factory retiree, is a little more straightforward: "I feel more comfortable here than back in my home. My friends might be here and we talk together." When the site is not seen exclusively as existing for the production of bamboo charcoal or other products, the timing of regular activity days matters little. Mr HM and two other members are some of the frequent visitors to the site on days other than the activity days. Like Mr TY at the community vegetable garden, for whom gardening itself did not matter, for the members of the charcoal-producing club, the charcoal production itself does not matter as much as their valuations of other things they can experience at the club.

In fact, the site is not a "workplace" in the manner of their former factories or offices. It is a "workplace" that instead helps the members decide how to sustain action and its environment, rather than one that presses them to perform better for a given purpose.

Creating a community: Extra-curricular activities

When I visited their site for the first time, I was surprised at the attractive and tidy arrangements all around the site. There are three sheds – one for the office, another for storing bamboo charcoal, and one for storing cut bamboo. In addition there are three kilns for producing bamboo charcoal. There are a distillation unit for vinegar and a workshop, all under one large prefabricated roof. The members built all these "facilities" themselves. Mr TY, a founder of the club, exclaimed: "We build anything and everything here using our own hands." He always emphasizes "our own hands" (f-n 8 December 2005).

Table 9.4 Samples of “environment maintenance and improvements”, 2006–2007

Date	Contents
January 2006	Installation of new bamboo chimney
April–May 2006	Improvement of stone steps from kiln to bamboo forest
May 2006	Building fence around slope leading to club complex
June 2006	Installation of new stainless-steel chimney
June–July 2006	Installation of a new (third) kiln
October 2006	Replacement of old roof on kilns
October 2006	Expansion of space for kilns
November 2006	Expansion of workshop and its roof
November 2006	Planted trees near entrance to complex
May 2007	Installation of smoking instrument (for pre-treatment of bamboo)
July 2007	Planted trees around hills

Actually, while I observed, one thing struck me – the charcoal production does not dominate the members’ activities, nor does it dominate their minds. They faced, instead, what appeared to be the daily chores of constantly improving the site as a whole and the production facilities. The members call these activities “environment maintenance and improvements” (table 9.4).

The chores, obviously meant to improve charcoal production, proceed without prior planning. Everything seems to move extemporaneously, and everyone engages him or herself as they please and at his or her choice of time.

Mr EK: Now, I think we’ll fix the stairs.

D. Watanabe: The stairs? Now?

Mr EK: Yep, stairs. It’ll help us bring the bamboos in from the forest, I think.

D. Watanabe: So, the stairs will run all the way from the kilns?

Mr EK: Yep. Some of us built these stairs. Everyone will do something about them, and then things will be just that much more handy (f-n 5 March 2006).

Mr KO hollered from somewhere one morning following a regular meeting, “Hey, I need a hand! We’ll cut those grasses on the slope, and build a fence to keep it tidy.” My response was, as was often the case in this context, off the mark: “Ah, the weeds have been growing.” Ignoring this, he proceeded to explain: “We build a small flowerbed here and build a fence around it.” Mr HM, another retiree aged 63, joined in:

“Until last year, we planted [flowers] little by little. But this year, we’ll do better. When outsiders visit here, they’ll be able to see them.”

There is also an air of “let it run its own course”, giving the feeling that what matters is not *what* they do, but the fact that they do it, whatever it may be. Mr TE, a 58-year-old retiree living with five family members including two grandchildren, talked about planting Japanese loquat trees. “Once they are deeply rooted, then they begin bearing fruit, oh, maybe in two or three years.” Mrs YM, running an independent business, is quick to add with a smile: “We may all be paralysed by that time.”

Mr KO summarizes the whole range of activities: “It is all for *improving the environment*.” Improving the facilities for charcoal production, however, disappears in the middle of these various activities – gardening, planting small trees, fixing the fences, decorating their sheds. “Improving the environment” is not a “project” in the sense that it has clearly defined goals or projected consequences. Here, another characteristic of the members’ activities emerges. Freed from the burden of a given goal, the members were liberated from viewing themselves as “colleagues” in a workplace. Mr KH, a 68-year-old retiree, once injured his right wrist and had to stay away from the club for nearly two months in the winter of 2006. During this time, he visited the site one day wishing to explain his absence. He talked about his injury as he recalled the scene at the site:

Mr KH: It’s too painful to move ... I went to a hospital, but the doctor had nothing to offer and said protect it while it’s healing itself. He said the recovery would be a long process.

Mr NW: Must be carpal tunnel, is it? You do need to have some time for it to heal. It’s difficult to recover quickly.

Mr KH: Yeah. That’s why I can’t do anything. If I come here, I can’t do anything. So I don’t need to come. I shouldn’t come here, I think.

Mr MO: Well, well. You can join verbally. All you have to do is to order us around, “Do this! Do that!”

Mr NW: Oh, that’s a great idea [laughing]. We’ll try to learn the skill to resolve things with words (f-n 21 January 2007).

On a site where they use many kinds of equipment and tools like electric saws, they are obviously very conscious of their deteriorating physical strength or increasing carelessness. This exchange of words, however, was not prompted by care for each other’s age. There was a far more fundamental care dictating this and other, more frequent, conversations. Mr

KO likes to remind everyone: “Slow down, slow down! It’s okay to do things slowly. We don’t receive money for what we do, so we don’t need to make ourselves busy. If you don’t want to get hurt, don’t rush things” (f-n March 2006). Mr NW, one of the oldest members at age 74, echoes his sentiments: “We are not doing this for money, we are doing this on our own accord. So you don’t have to push yourself. Anyone can come only when he or she wishes to come” (f-n 16 July 2006).

The members engage in various activities extemporaneously, while maintaining a relaxed internal relationship among themselves. The site now appears an accidental space, as the charcoal production itself does seem to be an afterthought. To put it more cynically, it all sounds as though the members are merely escaping their previous life of the “workplace and working hours”, with no consideration of the consequences of what they do.

There are consequences, nonetheless. The deepening attachment among the members to the site and its surroundings is one consequence. Another is the unshakable conviction that the change or even growth of the site is of their own making. What the site can do for them is not a question the members care much about. Here the clearest contrast can be made to, for example, the “commons for the elderly” mentioned above, where everything, including the buildings themselves, is planned, built, and maintained by municipal governments. The only thing left for the elderly to do is to *use* them. Instead, the members of the Takesumi Club always and constantly question what they can do for the site. The questioning sustains a process by which they create, improve, and transform a community of their own. Each effort that goes into making the community turns its members into communal beings.

A puzzle, then, remains: where are the marks of their pre-retirement life in this community building? The Takesumi Club sells its bamboo products. Their activities are therefore “production”, and their action “labour”. In fact, they often use terms closely associated with production or labour. “Production management”, “quality control”, and “quota” pop up constantly in daily conversation, which reminds us that most of the members once lived in a world where these terms prescribed the *rules* dictating their days. Mr TY, a club founder and former worker on an auto assembly line, showed this side when he insisted that they “want to make higher-quality products” (f-n 5 March 2006) in response to the increased demand for products from the outlet shop. Mr SI, even in defence of the club’s operation as something in contradistinction to the usual “workplace”, could not avoid using these familiar terms: “Everyone talks about the necessity of making higher-quality products. But I don’t think that our products are bad. Ours are of sufficiently superior quality already and very affordable. And our products are the making of

cost-efficient efforts'' (f-n 17 December 2006). In the absence of alternative terms, they would naturally have to rely on these familiar terms. At the same time, they are ultimately aware that the terms betray what they believe they are really doing. The effort to define what they do inevitably becomes halting:

Mr KH: So, [what I do here] is volunteer work, because it's unpaid work. Uh, I should call it volunteer work, shouldn't I? I feel like, ah, I play here. Maybe, I should say, I devote my energy ... I kill time, I think.

D. Watanabe: So you don't think that the activity is really work?

Mr KH: No, it's not work. The other day, I insisted that everybody should try to improve the quality of the bamboo vinegar. Then, I thought, it all sounded like raising production efficiency, quality control, you know? I know that's not how we do things. We don't have quotas here. I feel very comfortable. What we do is good for health, physically and mentally.

The Takesumi Club has all the ingredients for enhancing production efficiency. As mentioned earlier, the club has increasing profits, which it invests in equipment development and improvement to the facilities. Members' experience in the past as workers in various assembly lines or offices gives them some hint as to what they need to do and how. Such familiarity, however, is what seems to make them very sensitive to any sign of resuming the life they have left. They are acutely aware that the language of the world from which they parted cannot articulate their current life in making a community of their own.

Ikigai reconsidered

There is nothing absolutely conclusive as yet from my observations. I began by looking for the residual needs of the elderly that social services, public or private, could not cover. It was a search for the "unserviceable" needs. The void in life that retirement creates is one such need. As I participated in the club's daily activities, however, there was always the suspicion that most, if not all, of the members may be better off than many. Their lives are secure and stable partly because of the pensions they receive and various sorts of medical and other coverage that the government or their former employers provide for their lives in retirement. The void may be, in their case, the kind of need that the elderly would wish to fill only after every other need had been met. They were fortunate to have the club, which they could manage as they pleased. Yet this

in turn made me wonder if I had fallen into the trap of seeing the elderly as a group whose wellness depends mainly on the extent to which the "serviceable" needs are fulfilled.

The way the members of the club confronted this void, however, revealed that the confrontation was a process that is a little more complex. They did not experience a void due to the loss of their jobs. The void is part of the job description, "retirement", and part of the irreversible process of ageing itself. They wanted to fill the void, and at the same time they did not, nor could they, wish to revive or return to their pre-retirement lives. They needed to fill the void in an entirely different terrain, that of a post-retirement world.

Their activities that proceed without clear boundaries may be indicative of the nature of this new terrain. Everything must be built, maintained, and improved upon for this terrain to become habitable. Their engagement in these activities must be spontaneous, since there are no "job" descriptions for turning the new terrain into a habitable setting. It is symbolic, or at the very least no accident, that the members of the club habitually call these activities "the maintenance and improvement of the environment". The environment is their new terrain, in terms of mind, emotions, space, and time.

Their use of a certain language is indicative of the nature of inhabitants of a new terrain. Frequent references to "high quality" or "quotas" suggest that the terrain and its occupants have not developed a new language of their own yet. That leaves a large margin for the language of the old world to appear in the members' efforts to articulate their behaviour or what they do at the site. The club members were often apologetic about the use of the old language, or else struggled in search of an appropriate expression through a new language that could satisfy both themselves and me, a casual observer from the outside.

The club, in other words, is really an all-out effort to create a community, with its own "vernacular language" slowly emerging.⁸ The members, from the "old" world, are aware that their efforts are no afterthought, nor "labour" that defines its value through what it produces. There is an air of a seamless process around the activities at the site: the activities never end with an accomplishment of one, or any, task. The members value their activities not through what they accomplish. In this sense their activities, and the time and energy that go into them, are not investment for the purpose of gaining some return. The activities, creating, sustaining, and improving a community of their own, are the returns. There is nothing passive on the part of the club members in engaging themselves in these activities. If anything, they are positively committing themselves in creating this community. I began to think that the members were exercising, in the absence of an apt expression, the "right to live

the kind of life they have reason to value”, the central value of human security.⁹

That leaves some lingering questions in my mind, but the answers to them may lie outside of the scope of this research. How will the members change if the size of the community, to the creation of which the members, its original “settlers”, devoted much of their time and energy, also changes? How will the members cope with the increase in demand for what the community does, the production of charcoal and other bamboo goods? Finally, how will they cope with changes in the generations in this, the community of their own creation?

Notes

1. Charcoal made through a natural process from bamboo is undergoing a resurgence of popularity for household uses in Japan. Among other things it is used to filter the bad taste out of tap water.
2. See, for example, Phillipson (1998).
3. See Hobo (1996) and others, including Satoshi Watanabe's arguments in this volume.
4. Kuroiwa (1997: 217) pointed out that the “*ikigai* policies” which target mainly people still in good health are policies unique to Japan.
5. My position in the field has been ever-changing. At first members recognized me as “a strange student”. After a short time, their recognition changed to “a student who always participates”. At present they see me as “one of the members”, and call me by a nickname. However, the change of my position *vis-à-vis* the members does not directly mean that they accept me as a “normal” member.
6. In all the following quotes, I indicate the date as follows: (f-n: 21 January 2007) where f-n stands for field notes.
7. Bauman discusses the avoidance of killing free time in an unstructured manner, through his analysis of ways that the values in consumer society have changed from the work ethic to the aesthetic of consumption. As he wrote, “Not being bored – ever – is the norm of the consumers’ life, and a realistic norm, a target within reach” (Bauman, 1998: 39), and presumably people who cannot reach the target are self-deceived and fall into contempt.
8. The daily interaction of the club continues to produce its own “vernacular language” (Illlich, 1981). Through a shared, common “vernacular language”, they feel strong identity with their community (Anderson, 1991).
9. Sen (1999: 74–75) wrote that “I have tried to argue for some time now that for many evaluative purposes, the appropriate ‘space’ is [not] that of utilities (as demanded by Rawls), but that of the substantive freedoms – the capabilities – to choose a life one has reason to value . . . A person’s ‘capability’ refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve.” Development as the empowerment of capabilities will provide for people to obtain the “right to live the kind of life they have reason to value”. In these arguments we are obliged to understand concretely the capabilities of the people about whom we research. In addition, Sen’s arguments shared a concern with human security concepts. Documents such as *Human Security Now* consider the protection and promotion of this right as probably the most important goal for any policy aiming at the improvement of human conditions (Commission on Human Security, 2003).

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10

Human security practices in a highland minority project

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This chapter looks at northern Thailand as representative of a cluster of human security issues facing highland minorities and their NGOs throughout Southeast Asia. First, the highland or Montagnard populations in Thailand are composed of groups and individuals who continue to migrate back and forth among Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Viet Nam, and China. Second, the human insecurities they face have identifiable similarities despite the vast differences in their national contexts. The ethnic minorities of these countries share a lack of access to political and social capital, and much lower literacy rates and rates of access to social and physical infrastructures in comparison to the majority. The search for remedies to human insecurities such as these led to the founding of projects that focus mainly or partially on education for Montagnard minorities. This chapter is an effort to supplement the foregoing chapters of a scholarly and theoretical nature with observations, accounts, and data from a Montagnard NGO and the minority villages it serves in Thailand.

Introduction

The highlands of the Greater Mekong subregion and their inhabitants span the northern areas of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Viet Nam, and Yunnan and neighbouring provinces of China. This area has long been known for two distinctive characteristics: its ethnic diversity, and its hosting of an abundance of international NGOs, religious missions,

and other external interventions since the colonial period. None has been more characteristic of these than northern Thailand. Following the economic growth spurt and political reorientation of the 1970s, however, Thailand in the 1980s saw a renewed focus on internal and locally motivated initiatives. Many of these projects were founded by idealistic and well-educated young teachers, programme officers, and health professionals. The designers and administrators of these local initiatives were sometimes from the same areas or backgrounds as their “target populations” and sometimes not. Their common objective was to form, while learning from remote rural dwellers and ethnic minorities, individual projects and wide-ranging networks on the basis of generalized human security issues common to a range of people and areas. As such, they were among the first participant observers and practitioners in Southeast Asia.

Since that time, among the most visible of locally founded and run projects have been those on behalf of the “hill-tribe minorities”, otherwise known as Montagnards, or more appropriately by their own names for their particular ethnic groups and subgroups. The most populous ethnic groups of the Mekong highlands are the two major Karen groups, the Pwo/Pa-o and the Sgaw; the H’mong and their related groups, the Mien and Yao; the Akha (Hani) group of the Yi; the Lisu; and the Lahu (Muso). The H’mong, Mien (Miao), and Yao speak a language, and preserve family structures and means of livelihood, closer to rural Chinese traditions. The other groups come from within the Tibeto-Burman cultures and traditions. They are diverse from each other and from the majority populations. Their living areas have been either at high altitudes or at medium altitudes on mountainous slopes, making their food production and other forms of material culture different from the alluvial-plain, paddy-cultivating lowland majorities of their countries of residence.

The majority populations of Thailand and Laos for the last 600 or more years, as well as of Myanmar’s largest division, Shan state, are from the Tai (or Dai) ethnic group. The special features of the northern minorities are that almost all of them migrated within the last 100 years (though some Karen came much earlier) from outside Thailand, originating in southwestern China, and that they are non-Tai-speaking. Further, unlike the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, who also migrated almost entirely within the last century and a half, the Montagnards maintained or were compelled to maintain separate cultures, geographical spaces, and work from the majority groups (Kunstadter, 1967).

With regards to human insecurity, an extreme example of the lack or difficulty of access to basic infrastructures that could have saved lives is the effect of the June 2008 earthquake in the Beichuan area outside Chengdu, China. In this area those affected were the Qian, who belong

to a branch of the H'mong (Mien, Miao) group, one of the most populous highland minorities throughout the Mekong region, and one that "is thought to have retained the greatest proportion of the 'ancient' Miao language" (Prasit, 2008: 95–96). The substandard nature of some public buildings that had been provided for the Qian led to their collapse and the deaths of thousands of children and adults. Such material, substantial human insecurities and lacks are similarly found among remote or traditional H'mong communities in Thailand, Viet Nam, and Laos as well.

The north of Thailand is quite representative of a cluster of both material and social human security issues facing Montagnard minorities and their NGOs. First, as mentioned previously, the Montagnard populations in Thailand continue to migrate back and forth across borders. Though most have now been settled in Thailand for over 50 years, newcomers or transients continue to join their villages. In this sense, although they are now geographically located within the modern nation-state of Thailand, their groups, kin, and practices remain those of their extended region(s) of habitation and migration. Second, the human insecurities they face have identifiable similarities despite the vast differences in their political contexts. For example, in Laos all residents of minority groups are Lao by nationality, all resident (from birth) minorities in Myanmar have Myanmar nationality, and minorities in Viet Nam are legally considered Vietnamese. In China ethnic minorities are also legally Chinese and most have autonomous local governing authorities. In recent years the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand (formerly the Ministry of Social Welfare) has conducted surveys of its Montagnard population every three years, underscoring the government's perception of the relationship between development schemes for minorities and human security (*Directory of Highland Communities in Thailand*, Social Welfare and Development Department, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2002, quoted in Kwanchewan and Boonyasaranai, 2008).

Yet in Thailand the granting of citizenship to the ethnic minorities of the mountains has proved a slow and underimplemented process. And because Laos and Myanmar are not decentralized and China and Viet Nam only recently so, the possession of citizenship or nationality had little impact on political participation, making the ethnic minorities of these countries similar to those in Thailand in terms of lack of access to political and social capital. Further, their previous isolation and entrenchment, both geographical and cultural, meant that most ethnic minorities throughout the region had much lower literacy and numeracy rates, rates of fluency in the majority language, and rates of access to social and physical infrastructures, particularly schools and healthcare facilities, resulting in extremes of low income and low life expectancy in comparison to the majority.

Framework of the discussion

The first question that frames this chapter, then, is why were projects founded within Thailand to “assist” these minorities? For answers to the question of why, we ought first to look at when and who. Montagnard minorities first began to be of interest to the governments of the region at a time of transition – that is, when the tributary areas of Siam, consisting of what is now central, southern, and northeastern Thailand and northwestern Laos, were under various internal and external pressures. These areas, with the exception of northwestern Laos, were to turn into the nation-state of Thailand, which would eventually consist of more southern provinces, the central and northeastern areas, and, newly, the north or Lanna kingdom. As soon as the north became a part of the political and economic nation-state of Thailand – just prior to the Second World War – internal and external actors interested in the Thai political and economic future seemed to “discover” the hill tribes. Moreover, they wished to gain their allegiance and thus to create access to various other places and resources of the mainland through Montagnard territories. These actors were a fairly diverse lot, including the Thai government, the wartime Japanese military, European and North American missionaries and traders, and various logging concessions belonging to all of these. It was but a step from there to the post-war Thai government’s economic planning initiatives to include Montagnards, and thence to more serious interventions by the US military seeking assistance from among the minorities for its various initiatives against the Viet Cong, the Pathet Lao, and a presumed general threat of the spread of communism. Preceding and accompanying these more single-minded or self-serving interventions were attempts by Christian missions, charitable foundations, and the United Nations to provide education, maternal and child healthcare, and other basic needs to the northern minorities.

For above all the northern minorities have been seen, and often see themselves, as lacking to some degree in basic survival resources. On the one hand there is the nostalgic or romantic view among some Thais and outsiders that the “hill-tribe” ways of life are somehow more sustainable and humane than modern lowland life. On the other hand are the views taken in the past by district governments, and currently by some private and charitable groups, that minority life is inferior or unsustainable because statistically their life expectancy, child mortality, literacy, and access to healthcare show much worse rates than those of the majority population, and that their survival itself is threatened or compromised from every direction. The see-sawing of policies, programmes, and projects undertaken to compromise between, and achieve support from, these different sides and their adherents has necessitated a dazzling display of

ingenuity and flexibility on the part of local NGOs and the networks to which they belong. Should they, in order to obtain funding and other forms of assistance, portray their minority communities as the perpetrators of internecine conflict, sexist patriarchy, the drug trade, barbarism, and superstition, or rather as the victims of national and intergovernmental competition for natural resources and manpower? These two extremes are often far from the truth and yet, or perhaps therefore, convincing to the general and majority population, and also to some of the outside organizations which offer aid.

Under these circumstances, one of the chief battles that hill-tribe NGOs wage is a discursive one. Faced with mainstream prejudices in which they themselves at times participate, they are caught between the proverbial rock and hard place, seeking to create awareness of Montagnard community issues at the same time as they seek to dispel mainstream preconceptions that hill-tribe communities are by nature prone to difficulties. Further, there is a serious challenge, not limited to minority communities, coming from the fact that within any community the members are under no obligation to agree with one another, and for the most part do not do so. An example from a H'mong community may suffice. Asked by the present writers what the community's current needs were, the *Phâu yài bảhn* (village head) answered one way, his chief wife another, and his minor wife a third. If this seems merely a matter of gender disparity, another example is that grandparents answer one way, their adult children another, and the grandchildren yet a third. Within any community there are disparities of gender, age, and assets that can lead to either conflict or compromise. The Montagnard NGOs' task, then, is to find a middle way among all, while simultaneously promoting a progressive agenda. This is no mean feat even in the most advanced of communities.

The NGOs' task is further complicated by the fact that many hill-tribe communities have until recent years had no formal legal status, and thus did not exist as political entities on the map of governmental districts and welfare distributions. Further, precisely because they are Montagnard, they are located in mountainous and at times inhospitable regions where livelihoods may not be sustainable for more than a few years at a time. Some unfortunate consequences are that they move or have been forcibly moved on a frequent basis, have had no regular census, have been combined with or disbanded from other villages with different ethnic populations, have lost or gained certain "cultural" features, and at times became separated from their own history and the knowledge of their group members in other locations. The NGO that tries to deal with one or more of these groups within Thailand and its close neighbours encounters the challenges of population count, geographical location, and both intra-

ethnic and inter-NGO “culture wars” as to how Montagnards should be represented to the outside. In regards to the inconsistencies in the information on which Montagnard projects are based, Aguetant (1996: 54) remarks:

One may distinguish two main factors which account for these fluctuations, i.e. uncoordinated involvement of several agencies in the registration system, and a “fluctuating” population which is difficult to estimate in view of the fact that a significant number of hilltribe people are still unregistered or likely to be illegal migrants or migratory workers in the cities.

But if a consensus on facts within any of these communities themselves has been difficult, it has been at least as difficult within the network of NGOs that address minority issues in the 10 provinces of northern Thailand. The challenge is to identify enough reliable generalizations from among the target communities to enable the network to present an agenda capable of motivating political will among the mainstream government bodies, national and local, as well as to encourage funding from domestic and foreign aid sources. The difficulty here is with “reliable”. Any observer can generalize that many minority communities suffer from relative as well as absolute poverty, that their literacy rate needs boosting, or that their health and sanitary conditions are woeful. But district governments, as well as experienced funding agencies, are quick to point out that there are fairly viable hill-tribe communities and wealthy, educated hill-tribe members among them. As McCaskill, Prasit, and He (2008: 2) observe, the H’mong in Thailand, for example, “appear to be in the middle in terms of interacting with the larger society and gaining economic prosperity on the one hand and retaining their traditional culture on the other”.

Thus, in search of ways to form reliable generalizations, Montagnard NGOs have reached basic agreement on several human security issues and their measurement or assessment, all based on a single premise: that whether assimilation, which brings with it some loss of culture and autonomy, is good or bad, Montagnards ought to have the choice of participating in the mainstream nation-state education, legal system, and workforce or not. The main obstacles to choosing such participation, throughout the Mekong region, have been the legal ones of lack of citizenship and rights, and also the social and economic ones of capabilities and access. In order to provide greater participation and access, the chief factor emphasized by Montagnard NGOs is mainstream education:

Like the Thai hill tribes, many communities left out of the formal education system are ethnic or linguistic minorities who often also live in difficult-to-reach areas . . . “Illiteracy among youth and adults exists mainly among ethnic minority

groups,” says Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of UNESCO Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education. (UNESCO, 2002)

The legal issue that accompanies access to education is assimilation, with its positive and negative consequences. Assimilation in the legal sense has become an issue relatively recently. As mentioned above, post-war Thai economic planning began to include “hill-tribe” minorities and their living areas as early as the 1950s. A generation later the north saw proposals to make hill-tribe communities, and subsequently their residents, Thai under the law. Yet at the same time that the meaning and value of citizenship were being challenged to include access to basic services such as education and health, the Montagnard population continued to expand, with more minority residents than before living without such access.

Here we see the operation of an issue that has now grown to represent and define the very notion of post-modern statehood and citizenship. The human rights that a citizen can access within a single nation of multiple ethnicities have taken on a new meaning, in addition to the original meaning of physical and political security. This is the meaning of maintaining one’s particular diversity while enjoying equal access to universalized social services. Nowadays, to prove that people’s human rights are not being violated it must be demonstrated that they have the same degree of access to health and education as their compatriots while maintaining a separate community. It is precisely this more current view of human rights that prompted, and is reinforced by, the Montagnard NGOs’ activities. Further, due to the elements of access to social and economic capital, this view is closely aligned with the Commission on Human Security’s agenda for human security.

Issues of education and human security

In brief, the Montagnard NGOs’ emphasis on and some measure of success in providing education is indebted in part to the UN’s promotion, in the past 30 years, of education as a basic human need and its more recent target of education for all. The focus within the particular Thai setting is on the provision of choice to minorities as to whether and to what extent to participate in the mainstream society, economy, and law rather than exclusively in their own. As one of the bases for human security, education, particularly literacy education, is commonly expected to supply the skills and knowledge needed for future participation in economic activity and thus presumably to contribute to poverty eradication. It is further promoted as a means to a more democratic and participatory society.

However, in practice it is difficult to prove to people in remote villages that education leads to greater wage-earning opportunities if there are none in their immediate area. It is also difficult to prove that education leads directly to greater participation in the political system, especially if there is no physical or legal means of voting in a community that has not been officially acknowledged. One researcher on the H'mong in Viet Nam pointed out other reasons why education, which takes children away from family and farm duties, is not popular in H'mong communities: "population and family planning programs have not been well implemented in those areas. It is also because children remain an important labor force of the family" (Tinh, 2002: 4). If Montagnard NGOs are to promote education, they need more immediate and convincing reasons. The greatest of these reasons are those of sheer subsistence and self-employment. Minority residents who cannot count, cannot speak the mainstream language, or cannot spell are at high risk of having no means of selling or trading their products, or of being cheated if they do. Promotion of, and collusion with, the goals of mainstream public education thus became a necessity within the network of Montagnard NGOs.

Convincing the client populations by reasons such as political participation and democratization has never been an easy process. In general one of the other aims of Montagnard education is to enable greater self-determination, whether of livelihood potential, of choice among differing jobs, or choice of living environment and its political security. There are H'mong living in the lower north of Thailand (Petchabun province, Bahn Huay Nahm Khao village) who left Laos and what some report was political persecution there for their earlier assistance to Americans against the Pathet Lao. Several thousand such H'mong, currently without citizenship status in Thailand, are now subject to a request by the Lao government that they be repatriated (Supalack, 2007). Perhaps more important than the question of their citizenship is the question of their ability to read, write, and speak Lao or Thai at a level high enough to enable them to understand, and claim, their legal rights or articulate their choices *vis-à-vis* either government: an ability that only comes with education. Karen Palaung ("long-necked") women are brought from Myanmar to work in orchards in northern Thailand. They (the women reported on were in the village of Bahn Tong Luang, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai) are given work permits, some pay, and a place to live. But there is no evidence that they know that they have work choices, can leave after a specified duration (one had been there five years, although the permits were normally for two months), and can exit Thailand to return home at will (Anan, 2007). Again, they usually come without standard education, knowing no spoken or written Thai and perhaps also very little Myanmar. By contrast, due to the educational efforts of the Thai government,

Karen churches, and NGOs, the literacy and fluency rate among young Karens long settled in Thailand is higher than that of the recently arrived minority workers.

Once the means, finances, and access to public education have been provided to minorities, however, there is still the question raised by the ambiguity of this kind of “assimilation”, as indicated above. Will the minority children thus educated become unable to communicate with parents and village neighbours, and risk losing their language and cultural heritage or, worse, learning to despise them? Such fears, whether proven so far or not, have given rise to NGO initiatives to provide regular time and space within the educational system for renditions of ethnic culture. These can be seen in the designated days, in lowland Thai schools as well as in Montagnard NGOs themselves, for the wearing of ethnic clothing or speaking of birth languages by ethnic minorities. Naturally enough, these practices risk becoming hybridized performance displays, thus giving rise to another dilemma. In an NGO that seeks to provide educational opportunities for “hill tribes” in general, how does one give each separate group the appropriate time, space, and training to maintain an independent ethnic identity? Further, how does an individual NGO provide support and training for diverse minority youth to maintain proficiency in their birth languages but in age-appropriate fashion as they grow up?

Northern Thai case: Background and evolution of the Bahn Ruam Jai project

In 1984 two certified teachers from the Education Department of Chiang Mai University founded the Bahn Ruam Jai project to respond to the growing urgency of the educational and social gap between hill-tribe minorities and the majority population. One teacher was H'mong and the other was lowland Thai; both had earlier been posted to a H'mong village school for several years. Through their experience of the village and other H'mong communities in the same district they acclimatized themselves to H'mong customary law, traditions, and social structures, but also recognized the severity of the social and economic handicaps faced by the H'mong people. Some had migrated or fled from Laos during the war between Viet Nam and the United States; others had migrated, often much earlier, from China itself. Most were high-altitude Montagnards for whom the harsh climate of the mountains necessitated a rigid, even inequitable, division of labour and resources in villages and households. They had a low life expectancy, almost no literacy, and varying levels of food insufficiency. Theirs was a life that defined human insecurity.

In their efforts to begin to remedy these issues, the founders of Bahn Ruam Jai considered what the options were that could lead to a more

sustainable future within Thailand for tribal people. In 1984 five persons initiated the Bahn Ruam Jai project, conceived and implemented to provide dormitory housing close to the town of Chiang Mai for young people who could, if housed near educational facilities, go to public schools and become fluent in Thai as a second language. The original Bahn Ruam Jai was a town building of several rooms that housed such pupils. Bahn Ruam Jai as it stands today, more than 20 years later, consists of both a girls' and a boys' dormitory, kitchen and dining hall, offices, a learning centre and visitors' centre, and a plot of arable land to provide for a portion of the resident pupils' food needs as well the opportunity for them to observe organic farming techniques. One of the two founders has continued to this day as the director of the project.

School education had been entirely lacking in the lives of the first pupils and their parents and grandparents. Further, at a live-in facility the whole notion of education goes far beyond that of the classroom curriculum. The young residents of Bahn Ruam Jai were chosen not only to offer them scholastic opportunities, but also to address the other issues that accompanied the marginalization and insecurity of the Montagnard situation within Thailand. These included the insecurity of the family of the child. Children were referred to Bahn Ruam Jai by the police, the welfare department, or the village teachers on the basis of child welfare concerns: the continued unemployment and destitution of the parents, which would place the child at risk of child labour or trafficking; the parents' or close relatives' involvement in crime; their absenteeism; or the potential or reality of abuse of the child. The Bahn Ruam Jai coordinator and staff also undertook regular visits to minority villages throughout the north. In this way they themselves identified the village situations from which children would benefit by being removed.

In addition to the basic requirements of physical safety and access to education, Bahn Ruam Jai, as a live-in facility, also stressed the importance of preparation for living and livelihood beyond Bahn Ruam Jai. At the outset it was assumed that many of the pupils would return to their home villages, perhaps as the first among the villagers to be educated and speak Thai, and they would thus be called upon to be leaders in sustainable development and improving the quality of life within the village. Indeed, as table 10.1 shows, many of them followed such paths. As time progressed, however, and more opportunities for minorities became available in lowland society, many also chose to stay in lowland towns and work, visiting their village families on regular occasions. But whatever their choice, the fact that they were able, for the first time in their tribe's history, to gain waged employment among the Thai, as well as to access social and welfare services, was a further incentive to continue the Bahn Ruam Jai combination of providing the means to attend school and to gain life skills.

Table 10.1 Bahn Ruam Jai's graduates by ethnicity

Informant number	Gender	Educational level	Number of dependants	Current occupation	Spouse: ethnicity, occupation	Years at BRJ	Estimated household monthly income
I. H'mong							
3	M	BEng, Rachamongkontawet University	2 (11)	Isuzu, production manager		2	100,000
4	M	Primary school 6	5 (11)	Construction work	H'mong Night bazaar	3	4,000
5	F	High school diploma, adult education	(7)	Employer-owned family business, Bangkok		5	6,500 + room, board
6	F	BA, Ratchapat, Chiang Mai	2 (12)	Software producer (USA)	H'mong Lay minister	2	60,000 (USA)
7	M	Primary school 6, San Sri	3 (10)	Vegetable farming in village	H'mong	5	7,500
8	M	High school diploma, adult education	5 (13)	Farming and trading as middleman	H'mong	4	18,000
9	F	Primary school 6, adult education	6	Vegetable farming	H'mong	2	3,000
10	M	Middle school 3 (adult education?)	5 (17)	Farming	H'mong	2	3,500
11	M	Bible high school 6, Bible college	3 (5)	BRJ (NGO) staff	H'mong NGO worker	1	10,000

14	M	BS, Payap University	(8+)	Chiang Mai Technical College teacher		2	10,000
16	F	B Management, Ratchapat	3 (9)	Souvenir (USA)		2	200,000 (USA)
19	M	Certificate, Electrician	1 (7)	Electric service company		6	10,000
20	F	Middle school 3 (welfare school)	2 (9)	At souvenir and craft shop		6	9,000–16,000
21	F	Middle school 3	2 (9)	Vegetable farming		5	7,000
22	F	Towards BA Home Economics, Chiang Mai University	(8)	Student Also sells crafts at night bazaar		7	7,000 (student)
23	F	Middle school 2, adult education	2 (6)	Small craft shop	H'mong	4	15,000
24	F	Primary school 5, San Sri	2 (10)	Street vendor including at Jatujak		4	25,000
25	M	High school 6 (welfare school)	4 (12)	Military	H'mong	3	6,000
26	F	Primary 6, San Sri	3 (14)	Street vendor at Silom and Jatujak	H'mong	5	25,000
27	F	Primary 6, San Sri	5 (14)	Grows and sells vegetables	H'mong	3	20,000
28	F	BA, Ratchapat	(9)	NGO officer (Thai Rak Foundation)		9	8,500
29	F	Middle school 3, (welfare school)	3 (12)	Grows and sells vegetables	H'mong	4	22,000

Table 10.1 (cont.)

Informant number	Gender	Educational level	Number of dependants	Current occupation	Spouse: ethnicity, occupation	Years at BRJ	Estimated household monthly income
30	M	BA Commercial Administration, Ramkhamhaeng University	3 (13)	Mit-tae insurance company, Bangkok	H'mong Accountant	3	100,000+
31	M	BA Political Science, Ramkhamhaeng University	6 (16)	NGO officer for refugee assistance (Bangkok)		2	80,000 (INGO)
32	M	Certificate of Electrical Engineering, Lanna Polytechnic	4 (11)	Bang Poo industrial estate, electrical technician		4	55,000
33	F	Bible college (Isaan)	3	Bible teacher for Assembly of God	H'mong Assembly of God	3	9,500
34	M	High school 6, adult education, 1 year of technical college	3 (21)	Growing and selling vegetables and flowers		1	30,000+
35	M	Middle school 3, Jomthong		Sales, motorcycle shop		2	8,000
36	F	High school 6, Yuppapa Wittayalai	4	Cook at Christian foundation tribal hostel	H'mong Hostel bible teacher	2	15,500 household + room/board

37	M	Certificate, Electrical Engineering	4 (14)	Farming vegetables	H'mong	2	20,000
38	M	BA Theology, Bangkok	4 (5)	Teaching Bible at village church	H'mong Church worker	4	20,000
39	M	Middle school 3, Buddhisopon	5 (10)	Vegetable growing Also Tambol administrative office	H'mong Farming	3	15,000
42	M	Certificate of Agriculture, BA, Bible college	2	Church administrator	H'mong Church work	1+	7,000
43	M	Middle school 2, Buddhisopon	5 (12)	Farming		1+	Uncertain
45	M	Middle school diploma	3 (11)	Laundry at Bangkok apartment building	Divorced	2	15,000
51	F	Primary school 6	3 (9)	Housewife	H'mong Bible teacher	2	35,000 husband
53	M	Certificate, Electrician, Chiang Mai Technical College	3 (12)	Murata company in industrial estate, electrician	Mien From BRJ	2	45,000+
55	M	Middle school 3	1	Selling crafts in Bangkok, Hua Hin, south		3	80,000
56	M	Chiang Mai Technical College, Engineering	1 (2)	Sells crafts with mother at night bazaar		6	30,000

Table 10.1 (cont.)

Informant number	Gender	Educational level	Number of dependants	Current occupation	Spouse: ethnicity, occupation	Years at BRJ	Estimated household monthly income
57	M	BA Agronomy, Mae Jo University	5	Landscape design Selling crafts at night bazaar and weekends in Bangkok	(H'mong)	1+	30,000
58	F	Certificate, Accountancy, Chiang Mai Commercial School	3	Research assistant (Kunstadter)	H'mong Teacher (?)	1–	15,500 research
60	M	Middle school 3 (welfare school)	3 (15)	Farming Selling lychees		3	30,000
61	M	Electrician, Vocational College of Lamphun	(14)	Selling jewellery in night bazaar		6	8,000
62	M	Middle school 3	5 (7)	Farming	H'mong	3	6,000
63	F	BA, Payap University	1 (11)	Cashier at Carrefour	H'mong (French)	8	9,500
64	F	Middle school 3, adult education	4	Sewing for dress shop	H'mong	3	22,000
67	F	Certificate of Accounting, Chiang Mai Vocational School	(7)	Salesperson at Robinson's		6	13,000

68	F	Ratchapat		Production/office assistant, Norwegian crafts shop		11	14,000
II. Lisu (from Wawee, Doi Chang, Chiang Rai province, and Kampang Phet)							
50	F	Vocational college, Chiang Rai	(3 siblings)	Studying for university entrance exam		5	(student)
52	M	Middle school 3, Buddhisopon School, Chiang Mai	3	Prison (drugs), Bangkok		2	
59	M	Middle school 3, Yuppara Wittayalai, Chiang Mai	2	Coffee shop, tour service, insurance salesman		1	Over 100,000
III. Karen (from Huay Hoi, Samoerng, and Jom Thong in Chiang Mai province)							
44	F	High school diploma, vocational college	2 (3)	Housewife and farming	Tambol officer	9	8,000
48	M	Middle school diploma, Jom Thong, Wittayakom		Prison (robbery) Factory, Bangkok		11	—
49	F	Middle school, Sansai, Wittayakom	1	Housewife, vegetable garden	Karen Formerly military	7	6,000
66	M	Ratchapat		Sales, air conditioning		7	8,500
69	M			Tour guide		2	8,000–15,000
70	M	BA, Chiang Mai University	1	Vegetable farm	Karen At home	2	?

Table 10.1 (cont.)

Informant number	Gender	Educational level	Number of dependants	Current occupation	Spouse: ethnicity, occupation	Years at BRJ	Estimated household monthly income
IV. Akha							
47	F	Middle school 3, adult education	2	Small pub in night bazaar	Japanese Computer shop	4	30,000 (from Japan)
V. Mien							
1	M	Ratchapat	3 (12)	Police sergeant	Thai Nurse	3	10,500
2	M	Ratchapat	2 (11)	NGO officer	H'mong Civil servant	2	10,800
12	M	Ratchapat	1 (3)	Vegetable farm (France)	H'mong	3	90,000 (France)
13	F	High school diploma, adult education, Yuppapa Wittayalai	1 (10)	Apparel trader (Malaysia)		4	90,000 (Malaysia)
15	F	BA, Pratumwan University	2 (10)	Furniture sales (southern Thailand)		4	40,000
17	F	Middle school diploma	4 (12)	Silversmith (shop)	Mien (or H'mong)	3	50,000
18	M	Adult education	4 (12)	Silver ornaments	Mien (or H'mong)	4	5,000
40	F	Technical college (vocational)	2 (4)	Software repair, Taiwan	Chinese Software repair	1	45,000

41	F	High school diploma Yuppara Wittayalai	3 (11)	Housewife	Taxi driver	1	18,000
46	M	3 years of university	1 (8)	Resort shop at Samui island	Thai	8	30,000– <i>80,000</i>
54	F	Middle school diploma	3	Construction equipment sales	H'mong	1	19,000
65	M	High school diploma, Yuppara Wittayalai	4	Silversmith and sales to shops	Mien	1	30,000

Notes:

Educational level: BA includes an equivalent educational level.

Dependants: figures in parentheses include spouses, children, and the reported number of siblings, elderly parents, and step-parents back in the villages.

Monthly income: figures in italics = higher income; figures in bold = lower income.

In terms of social services, it has been important to Bahn Ruam Jai's former residents that, even upon returning to their villages, they could gain healthcare for themselves and their spouses, children, and elderly. Where, a generation ago, a minority villager would have suffered, without treatment, curable illness or injury and early mortality, the current fact of having a younger family member who can speak, read, and write Thai makes a world of difference. The educated family member knows how to accompany those needing healthcare to the district or provincial hospital, in itself a trip that the older generation would not or could not have undertaken. The educated person also knows how to speak to doctors, nurses, and pharmacists, translate the mother tongue into standard Thai or *Kham Meuang* (the northern dialect) to explain the patient's symptoms, read directions on medication, go into a Thai-run shop, and read the labels on products. These simple and even boring tasks are quite beyond the ability of someone who cannot speak, read, or write the standard language. Yet they can mean the difference between life and death.

For these reasons, it should be emphasized that the notion of enhancing individual and personal capability is not the sole, or perhaps even the most important, target or result of educational initiatives in resource-poor communities. The enhancement of the potentials and capabilities of human capital has been promoted by a range of specialists, from economists like Amartya Sen to those working on the practical level as development practitioners and planners.¹ Here, however, it is significant that the scholastic and life-skills experience gained at Bahn Ruam Jai are not only for the sake of the individual young people who live and study there. No villager in this context exists simply as an individual. Behind and beyond him or her wait the parents, grandparents, extended family, and neighbours for whom the experience and ability of that individual will also, to a degree, be of benefit. In lives and communities where no one survives alone, the capabilities provided to one may be provided to many.

The limits of income comparisons in assessing effectiveness of education

For the 43 alumni whose entrance to/departure from the BRJ were surveyed by year, all entered between the years 1984 (beginning of the project) and 1999. The majority, almost 60 per cent, left for work during the 1990s or later. Choosing the median years 1994–1996 for their entry into the workforce, one way we can compare the living standards of the BRJ participants with those of non-participants is by using the income measurements of that time. In these years the largely uneducated Montagnards, including BRJ pupils' parents, were part of a national survey by the Thai government as to income. Whereas the national income aver-

age in 1994 was 61,903 baht and the northern regional average was 30,607 baht, the average income for a Montagnard in the same year was only 2,500 baht (about US\$100); and in 1996 approximately 14,000 baht per year for a household of 5–6 persons (FAO, 2003: 23 n. 11).

The above shows that among surveyed populations slightly over 10 years ago, at the time that the Bahn Ruam Jai project had moved to its current location and expanded to house 40 pupils, the average Montagnard income per family was less than 40 per cent of the northern regional average, which was itself lower by half than the national average. The statistical data (table 10.1) for 70 surveyed graduates of the Bahn Ruam Jai programme show the current (2006–2007) much higher incomes of those who were participating pupils at the time of the 14,000 baht annual hill-tribe income mentioned above. If we consider income as an important indicator of educational value, we should look at why or how Bahn Ruam Jai has produced graduates whose income is so much higher than that of their parents' generation.

We can see from the survey data that incomes vary widely even now. Looking first at the types of employment as a variable, we may divide the incomes by category analysis; that is, those which would enable the person – at this stage of the analysis seen only as individuals – to be categorized as doing well, in terms of earning sufficient income to support a nuclear family or family of five persons or less; or doing poorly, in terms relative to lowland northern Thai incomes and current purchasing power. Although the nuclear family is not traditional among Montagnards, the current generation of young adults are tending towards fewer children. Nonetheless, it is well to bear in mind that what is a high income if distributed among a family of 5 persons is not high when shared among 10 or more, as will be discussed later.

Let us categorize those doing “well” as those whose self-income (income that may be earned and spent as an individual) is 25,000 baht per month or above. Bearing in mind the hazards and ambiguities of self-reporting, there are still potentially 21 such individuals out of 70 (informants 3, 6, 12, 13, 16, 24, 26, 30, 31, 34, 46, 47, 51, 53, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 17 and 65). If type of employment is used as a variable, which it normally is under the assumption that education leads to greater and more lucrative job choices, then we can categorize their employment types as follows. Most of them (6, 12, 13, 16, 31, 34, 47, 51, and 59) are either working in a foreign country, have a spouse who is working in or is a citizen of a foreign country (47), are working for a foreign entity or religious organization in Thailand, or are marketing services to foreign tourists. Another job category consists of those who are able to work as, or with, salespeople or intermediaries (*Nài Nâh*) for the sale of their own products to remote markets or as owners of their own shops (17, 24, 26, and 65). These include vendors in large open-air markets catering to

foreign tourists as well as Thais, such as the Jatujak market in Bangkok or the night bazaar of Chiang Mai, a strip of vending carts and booths along the main hotel and shopping street. Finally there are those in the highest income category who are working for foreign corporations owned by Japanese or others (3, 30, and 53). In all, this means that a remarkable 30 per cent of the surveyed Bahn Ruam Jai graduates are doing as well as or better than highly paid Thais in the northern region. However, it must be borne in mind that in the case of those who are working abroad or have a spouse so doing, the cost of living is commensurately high, and may not reflect a higher standard of living in that country. Taking into account these various incomes and their possible relation to standard of living, at this point we can say simply that education to socialize into the Thai (or other) workforce has enabled more, and in some cases more lucrative, choices for those 30 per cent in this income category.

Those who are doing well enough to support a nuclear family's basic needs are those who, at the current writing, are earning 15,000–24,000 baht per month (8, [20], 23, 27, 29, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 45, 54, 58, 64, 65, [69]). There are thus 14 individuals solidly within this range, and 2 (those in square brackets) at the lower end of it, meaning that 22 per cent of Bahn Ruam Jai graduates are able to support themselves and/or a nuclear family within the same range of income and expenditure as a northern Thai family. This is again quite different from what their parents could have expected to do at the time, 10–13 years ago, when the national survey quoted by the FAO (2003) was made and the current earners were pupils at Bahn Ruam Jai.

At the lowest end, those who are doing surprisingly poorly in purely economic terms (given their opportunities for education) are those whose income is only up to 7,500 baht per month. How should we analyse their job variables or life choices in order to explain their low income? We may first try breaking down the low-income data as follows. These earners show one or more of the following characteristics: they are now living back in their home villages; they are engaged in agriculture primarily for self-consumption; they are producing crafts that are marketed by another entity, not themselves; they are engaged in seasonal or day labour (hired labour or *rap jang*); they were in prison at the time of the survey; they were studying for a higher diploma or degree at the time of the survey; or they were receiving free room and board or other compensation at their place of employment (informant 5). In total, there are 10 persons in this category, or 14 per cent of those who resided at Bahn Ruam Jai for a year or more.

Another way of seeing the category of income under 7,500 baht is that “doing poorly” in terms of income is not necessarily a criterion of failure, destitution, or human insecurity. Self-consumption, when self-sufficient, and deferral of higher income while engaging in higher education or in

rent-free earning are also investments in the present and the future. They have the potential to support not only the individual but the individual's relatives as well.

If we pursue such alternative ways of viewing the data as a whole, and of income in particular, we can formulate other, clearer explanations. As mentioned above, income or other capabilities in a resource-poor village setting of mutual interdependence should not be seen solely in terms of an individual's capability. The "high" income of certain informants may at any time suddenly be called upon for emergencies or insecurities involving other relatives outside the typical nuclear family that is the focus of Western economic surveys. In the "Number of dependants" column (table 10.1) there are two figures, one in parentheses. The figure standing alone represents conventional dependants such as spouses and children, while the figure in parentheses represents these plus the reported number of siblings, elderly parents, and step-parents, most of whom were still in the village. Some of these figures are in the teens or even up to 21 possible dependants. These represent the village-bound and usually illiterate relatives who, due to a lack of educational opportunities, may have no income and thus no possibility of accessing food, healthcare, or other basic needs should an insufficiency or crisis occur. Whereas in the recent past such profound insecurity would have meant almost certain death, now the relatives will expect the educated person to assist in whatever way possible, as will the educated person him- or herself. Obviously, then, one "high" income resulting from education can be shared among a number of persons. This makes income itself a double-edged sword: it provides the possibility of a safety net for many others beyond the individual, but it can also be stretched so thin over so many persons that the original advantage or capability again turns to poverty (Smith, 1997: ch. 4). Economic capability, then, is either not a sufficient measurement of the value of education or it is not being defined and measured in ways appropriate to the resource-poor human capital in developing regions of the world.

Critique of conventional assessments linking educational projects to income

Now we can turn to analyses of the data in terms not only of income, but what income can tell us in a larger and more complex context in assessing the value and potential of education in resource-poor communities. First we need to look at what the data tell us is inadequate, or even misleading, about current measurements and surveys.

As would be expected, there is a correlation between the final level of education and subsequent job, in terms of some or all of the other variables of income and job type. There are also correlations with progressively less tangible values such as job security, prestige of the job within

the community, and authority conferred by the job. These may be quite different from the valuations assigned by outsiders or development planners. The list below gives some examples and their valuations from the Bahn Ruam Jai graduates' jobs.

- Job security: company manager.
- Job prestige within the community: electrician.
- Job authority as position or level within the workplace: engineer.
- Job authority as authority within the community: *Tambol* (local government) administration; police.

As we would also expect, there is some correlation between the informant's level of education and the earning capacity of the informant's spouse. This is, of course, a traditional as well as a modern means of accumulating wealth within a family.

Taking the above two positive findings into account, a major factor that should be taken more seriously is the potential responsibility of the earner for extended family, as mentioned above. This is a way of saying that the expenditure or cost-burden side of the equation must be included, with the addition of the rather anti-modern notion that benefits and capabilities are not for the sake of, nor do they belong to, only the individual or the nuclear family. Within these data this is especially true for the H'mong, where the concept of family planning is not well received. A more highly educated and higher-earning sibling or adult child may be financially responsible for quite a number of extended family members if there is a crisis. As the data show, some H'mong belong to extended families of over 15 persons, most of them still in the village and thus probably without high earning potential.

From this perspective, again, it is not valid to say that the individual benefits from higher education. Rather, education can provide a *shared* capability in traditional or resource-deprived communities. The benefit accruing to educating one person in an illiterate family thus ought to be seen, and provided, as a benefit that can be spread to a far larger number of people. In fact this was the principle behind the founding of the Bahn Ruam Jai project. Education that enhances the personal status, earning capacity, and purchasing power of the individual as a free agent – meaning one who acts by and for him- or herself – is nearly useless in such settings. For these reasons, Bahn Ruam Jai has a mandate to sustain the pupils' original culture and language in so far as is possible, to maintain contact with their relatives and villages of origin, and to provide non-school forms of knowledge and information that will be useful to their extended family and even the village itself as a whole, such as life skills and organic cultivation techniques.

Because resources often have to be shared, sometimes to the point of invisibility, among a large number of people, the result of education and

higher income may very well not be greater wealth or its accumulation over time. There may in fact be the same or even less wealth for the individual with more education and earning potential when his or her capability must support a widely extended family network of destitute individuals. Rather, the result is closer to something that Clifford Geertz (1963: 97) called "shared poverty". The education of one or a few within the extended family can provide a minimal safety net when human security within the family is seriously threatened. The negative result, however, is that, purely in terms of the economic growth model, neither the community nor the persons involved accumulate or circulate the kind of monetary wealth that promotes continuously increasing production and consumption. There is, however, at least one very significant positive result, but it is one that we seldom measure or evaluate: individual capabilities like education and earning potential can keep the worst destitution at bay for the larger human network, even when the result is less of the measurable kinds of capital for any or all.

Further, there are other as yet unmeasured categories that are indeed seen as conferring very necessary types of security on the individual, household, and community. The safety net provided by the more-educated family member at one point may be reciprocated later by another, less-educated family member who provides what the Thais call "spiritual security", including membership in a human and psychological network of comfort that has far less to do with earnings, and in fact existed before cash earnings came in.

However, once we understand that there is such a minimal safety net of individual earnings that can be mobilized on behalf the poorest relatives, we may find ourselves wanting to ask where the cut-off point is. That is, from a developed-country point of view, what is the point beyond which the sole educated earning person's capabilities will be stretched too far in the village to benefit anyone at all? The Montagnards are in economies and communities where most, if not all, jobs are in the informal sector and earnings can disappear at any time. In other words, up to what number of such relatives can the safety net of one person's higher income stretch without great or irreparable loss to any one person? And where does that person's safety net become stretched so thin that it ruptures, leaving the higher-educated individual as well as the dependants in measurably worse shape, or in no better shape, than before? We might well raise such concerns upon looking at the data for informant 34, who has an extended network of relatives numbering 21 people. As Birdsall and Amoudi (2004: 135) put it:

it may be that as long as the existing stock of human capital remains below some threshold, modest increases are relatively ineffective in producing growth;

indeed, the deficit between the existing stock and this threshold, combined with an adverse economic structure and low organizational and institutional capacity, could perpetuate a poverty trap.

However, in the context of the village's non-financial reciprocity of the "spiritual" and social network, this is either the wrong question or an unanswerable one. First, how does one measure the "stock" and its threshold when these involve delicate, complicated, and culturally rooted sorts of "calculations" as to the benefits and costs of giving everything one has to someone more destitute than oneself? Second, what is the point of asking about, or attempting to calculate, such a threshold of assistance when heretofore the only alternative has been no alternative at all? Rational economics presumes that humans are individuals, that as individuals they have a range of more or less free choices, and that such choices can be made in ways that will maximize the benefit of, again, the individual.² Yet in the Montagnard village, as we have seen, there is little or no benefit for the individual if the human network does not also benefit. Put more simply, it is as a consequence of the lack of choices, resources, and social welfare that are not yet available from the nation-state that the village has evolved such human and intangible networks.

An important set of variables that need to be included are those involving what we may call the will or provision for the future on the part of the pupils and their human network of family and village. The will of the pupil as to his or her future, and the future of his/her dependants, may have quite a bit to do with the effort to secure future job security and income level. Further, if the parents have encouraged their child's education and success, or at the very least allowed it, this should be reflected in the child's capability. Yet the village and the older generation in it have often had no opportunity to think or plan beyond the daily demands of survival, and in such communities education is still not prioritized or appreciated because it takes the child away from these other, more urgent pursuits. These include of course the farm work that enables the child and his or her family to eat. In the demanding environment of mountain cultivation, a deficit of even one or two field labourers results in a food deficit for all. But these extra-curricular and necessary activities also include the less measurable, but profoundly important, long-term benefits of engaging in work and family care, in which the young person learns the life skills, social and cultural skills, and indigenous knowledge that are appropriate in that setting to human security, in non-financial terms, within it.

It is the Herculean task of Bahn Ruam Jai and other projects like it not only to convince such families, but to prove tangibly to them – and ultimately, to policy-makers and funding sources at the national and

international levels – that education for children of destitute families of 10 or 20 members not only will incur no loss to the family, but will provide them with the opportunity for a “future” whose outlines and very existence they may have never had the time to consider. What is, after all, the point of taking time for schooling when we can see from table 10.1 that greater wealth in monetary terms is not a guaranteed outcome?

First, immediate, measurable, and personal gains in wealth are not the primary objective of Bahn Ruam Jai, nor indeed of national and international initiatives towards education for all. Yet villagers and their dependants are under no illusions as to the necessity of cash income in their present society, where everything from food and water to the quest for knowledge has a price tag on it. It is not only modern, educated citizens who want higher income; it is also the villagers themselves, currently reliant though they are on non-financial human resources, who nonetheless urgently want to see gains in income to cover needs that now cannot be met in any other way. At the very least, they are not easily able to bear the losses to household production that might result from sending children to school. With these points clearly in mind, we can now turn to other kinds of variables, measurements, and their cross-referencing that may provide ways forward.

Conclusions: Alternative parameters

As we have seen above, economic capability is either not a sufficient measurement of the value of education or it is not being defined and measured in ways appropriate to the resource-poor human capital in developing regions of the world. Other indicators are needed, and grounded knowledge that can formulate these other indicators is even more sorely needed.

When we seek other kinds of measurements and assessments, we need to keep in mind that we must identify not only lacks, insufficiencies, and problems, but, in order to remedy them, we must also identify their causes and supports – the events and systems that maintain actions – within the localized context of meaningful human exchanges.

If a minimum cash income is necessary to access the kinds of services, for example education and healthcare, that enhance human security, so are the kinds of things that may go with cash income but are less measurable. For example, a relative needing hospital treatment requires the educated family member not only to pay for it, but also to accompany the relative to hospital, make an appointment, negotiate with healthcare providers, and translate their directives from the mainstream language

into that of the ethnic minority. Perhaps the keystone of all of these associated abilities is the social capacity of the educated person to make him- or herself accepted and taken seriously by the service provider. It is precisely this intangible yet paramount feature that minorities were unable to project in the days when mainstream education was out of their reach.

Social discrimination against minorities is by no means only a peculiarity of the Thai nation, nor only of developing or poor nations. In general, nations that attempt to overcome, legally or economically, the disadvantages faced by minorities have relied, as in this example, on the panacea of education. Education provides a means for its stakeholders to present themselves physically, linguistically, and socially in a manner that is intended to minimize discriminatory and negative perceptions by the mainstream. Such self-presentation, however, can be at the cost of requiring the minority member to conceal, discard, or constantly “bridge” between a birth identity and a different one that seems more acceptable to the majority.

It has also been the mission of the Bahn Ruam Jai project to facilitate such bridging in a manner that requires less psychological and cultural cost to the ethnic minority and at the same time offers the benefits, or the choice, of economic integration into mainstream employment opportunities. Given these existing contexts and future objectives, we do not necessarily need to assess the return to the village by a small percentage of Bahn Ruam Jai’s graduates as “doing poorly”. Rather than seeing a return to the village as always giving up or a failure, and employment in town as “success”, we can, by looking at the entire sample of 70 persons, also perceive the fact that ethnic minorities who have chosen to return to the village may preserve traditional lives with less identity conflict or psychological stress to themselves, while the informants who go to work in the towns may provide the safety net of a higher income, though perhaps at the cost of shuttling between two incompatible identities. In other words, in discussing the positioning of an individual as part of a larger human network of reciprocity, we can also see Bahn Ruam Jai as such a network. The same way we have been viewing the human data as an interrelated whole can, and should be, applied to the extended community of Bahn Ruam Jai’s current pupils and past graduates as well.

Notes

1. See the conclusions reached by Sen (2000) in his lecture series published as *Commodities and Capabilities*.
2. See the arguments set forth in Arrow et al. (1999).

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Epilogue

Research in human insecurity

Michio Umegaki

Unmasking human insecurity

Coming into being in 1994, the notion of human security has not given itself a sufficient time to mature. Consequently, little research on human security can yet benefit from a well-tested and comprehensive framework for analysis. There are a few outstanding works with human (in)security in their titles. David Roberts's (2008) *Human Insecurity* on millions of unnecessary deaths among women and children, Mary Kaldor's (2007) *Human Security* on wars, or Caroline Thomas's (2000) *Global Governance, Development and Human Security* on globalization may top the list of the growing "human security" literature. Monographic in nature, the strength of these pioneering works lies in the judicious use of the young notion by the authors in illuminating the old issues of our time in a newer light; but they still fall short of providing an alternative, and general, framework for human security research.

There are efforts to conceptualize the notion of "human security", too. Gary King and Christopher Murray (2002), who attempt to offer a "measurable" definition of human security, may be viewed as responding to a plea in the *Human Development Report* to design an "early warning system" (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 3). A short but useful essay is Sabina Alkire's "Concepts of Human Security". Alkire's survey of the human security literature contributed by both academics and practitioners succinctly presents the current status of human security

research: research on human security may be gathering momentum but remains “disparate” (Alkire, 2003: 34).

The absence of a comprehensive, and conceptual, framework for the analysis of human security is also the making of the notion itself. As evident in many of the human security documents, human security is so broad and vague that, as one of its critics puts it, “everyone is for it, but few people have a clear idea of what it means” (Paris, 2001: 88). The *Human Development Report 1994*, too, readily admits the difficulty in identifying what may constitute human security, which is more readily “identifiable by its absence than its presence” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 23). The difficulty, then, is unavoidable for human security research: how could anyone identify what is especially relevant when everything *can be* relevant, and how could anyone capture something whose presence can be identified only by its absence? Consequently, and perhaps inevitably, human security research tends to drift more towards something obviously calamitous, overpowering, and disruptive such as global warming, pandemics, ethnic cleansing, or hunger-induced deaths.

The point of departure for this volume is our resistance to this drift, and this lies in our understanding that threats to safe and secure life may not always nor only take the form of cataclysmic events. For one, there is a concern among us that attention to a catastrophic event may blind us to far more durable and less obvious changes – and their neglect – which cumulatively threaten or disrupt safe and secure life. A flood is an important policy concern, and so is the need for relief and prevention of the secondary disasters that may follow the flooding. But there should be equally important concern with the earlier phases of a flood, i.e. the slowly rising tide or water level before it becomes an actual threat, with how people recognize or fail to recognize it, and with how people act or fail to act accordingly.

For another, the attention to an obvious disaster or catastrophe is often a prelude to a search for its origin(s). The problem is that the search could well become endless, as the origin(s) of a catastrophe is often a complex of factors, each of which may demand further search for its origin(s). Inevitably, observations of life at the site of a disaster, or at the tip of an immense iceberg, become secondary or auxiliary to the seemingly more fundamental task of “reaching to and nipping at” the roots of the problem. The value of this fundamental task is undeniable, as it may help prevent the repeat of the same or a similar problem. However, equally important and often neglected is the attention to life at the site of a disaster, or during the process of its making. After all, people do live *with* the problem, however limited the resources may be at their disposal.

The chapters collected in this volume do go through areas of calamitous, disruptive, or overpowering threats such as environmental degradation, pandemics like HIV, or the plight of migrant workers whose lives seem suspended away from their own homes. Each has been the subject of scholarly and practical concerns and has produced a list of publications a great deal longer than that on human security. Taken together, these issues offer points and pose questions about the value of changes represented by such aggregate data as the increase in per capita national income, the improved life expectancy at birth, or the increase in literacy.

The chapters in this volume, however, are not additions to the already wide collection of evidence that *may* discredit or undermine the value of these human achievements.¹ They are about parts and fragments of life impacted by these changes. They reveal *more* about these changes, as their narratives and observations tell us how people live with or by these changes. The primary concern of the chapters is with “normal” conduct of life sustained by ordinary citizens, which nonetheless reveals the ubiquity of threats to human security.

The events that appear in the chapters are often illustrative of how people live in blissful indifference, how they are resigned to accepting life the way it is, or how even realization of an imminent threat may not be powerful enough to change the conduct of life. The narratives and observations make a modest statement only, for example living as “normally” as one can expect may still expose a person, or the entire family or community, to health and other risks.

The individuals are not particularly conscious of what makes their lives fall short of safety and security. None is definitely heroic in their efforts to confront disruptive threats to life. The majority of the individuals who appear in these chapters do not know or care about what human security may entail. They are, however, aware when life becomes intolerable within the purview of their own lives. They *are* the spotters of human security “through its absence than its presence”. Thus only through an understanding of these individuals and their lives would we perhaps come closer to grasping the workings of that which undermines safe and secure life.

Investigating the “uninvestigated”

Thus neither a cataclysmic event nor people with extraordinary talent or achievements or exceptional hardship occupy these chapters. In their place, a “normal” conduct of life figures prominently. And that is everywhere, be it in a refugee camp or in a small lot of farmland under the pressure of higher productivity or in an ageing community whose population is quickly depleting. The *Human Development Report 1994* inadvertently

touched upon this essence of ordinary life when it underplayed the significance of economic wealth: “accumulating wealth is not necessary for the fulfilment of some important human choices” (United Nations Development Programme, 1994: 15). A deceptively simple rule underscores “normal” life: people do not hinge their lives upon the fulfilment of a certain set of conditions, nor do they suspend living just because it is short of certain prerequisites. They conduct life with whatever resources are at their disposal.

Attention to the “normal” conduct of ordinary life, therefore, is an important shift in research in human (in)security. It releases our mode of thinking from a rigid framework in which we tend to hold people either as the beneficiaries or the victims of the changes certain policies have generated. From this shift follows another, bringing us closer to one of the principal propositions in human security documents: given the conditions generated by whatever the preceding policies, “people are the most active participants in determining their well-being” (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 4).

This shift in thinking is particularly critical since any policy is designed usually so that it can maximize its “beneficiaries”, for reasons such as limited revenues, the need for cost-efficient implementation, or even the need to produce an annual “progress” report. The broader the range of the beneficiaries a policy presumes, the less tuned that policy becomes towards the specific contexts defining the needs of the people for whom the policy is supposed to be devised. Any policy, in other words, requires customization or appropriation of its impact within the specific contexts where the problem in need of solution manifests itself. Effectiveness of any given policy, in turn, depends on the people’s ability and willingness to *customize* the impact. The shift prompts us to keep one important question afloat: what determines people’s ability and willingness to customize the impact of a given policy? The question deters us from imposing upon the people the role of a cipher of given circumstances. With this question in mind, the chapters in the volume are distinctly different from mere tales of daily life. They capture people and their communities within the frame of, to borrow Gayatri Spivak’s notion, the “uninvestigated” (quoted in Waterson, 2007: 7).

Turning attention away from the eye-catching events or disasters or extraordinary people, on the other hand, can be subjected to criticisms of various kinds. For one, if life emptied of events or unusual individuals is the subject of observation, why not treat it in an aggregate manner? Critics may argue that a person’s actual life, as presented in the volume, is a deviation, *a dot*, from one regression line or another. Even immensely diverse lives, they may add, can be more efficiently, and *quantitatively*, represented as numerous “dots” away from one line of regression or

another. For another, how can we ensure that the life selected for the observation is not too unique, and is capable of representing more than itself – what historian Peter Burke (1992: 41) calls the problem of typicality?

Perhaps the best answer to the former charge lies in the fact that attention to ordinary life is a way of magnifying what may constitute or determine the “distances” between the individual “dots” and the line(s) of regression, and, more importantly, of recognizing that the differences among the “dots” as measured by their “distances” from the line of regression may reflect differences in the “ability and willingness” to customize the impact of a given policy.

For the latter, one response is that there are means available to narrow the range of selections, be they individuals or communities. Statistical and historical data are at our disposal, allowing us to interpret and define the general contours of the lives observed in this volume, thus at least reducing the chances of their uniqueness. None of these chapters bypasses the services of the available data, textual or statistical, in ensuring that their observations lie inside the contours. There is no random selection of what to observe.

Beyond this demarcation, however, the chapters’ aim shifts away from treating the observed as a “case”, proving or disproving the presence of a rule or set of rules. The research is similar to a clinical investigation as it seeks for meaningful signs, indicative of how ordinary individuals or their community embrace and recognize – or fail to recognize – dormant, potential, and actual threats to a safe and secure life, how they cope with them with the resources at their disposal, and what resulting changes they may or may not exhibit in their behavior. A paraphrase of Geertz’s famous distinction may help make the point: human (in)security researchers don’t study ordinary life, they study in ordinary life.²

Reversing the recipe

Finally, attention to the ordinary life still touches one important question: the responsibility of the state through the actions of the central (and local) government. Beyond devising “meaningful” policies to promote and protect safe and secure life, what role is there for the state to perform? As mentioned earlier, the burden of proof for the effectiveness of a policy largely rests with people and their community. Attention to ordinary life is a way of arguing that making a policy alone is far short of exonerating the state from further responsibility. It suggests a reversal of the usual recipe, in questioning the legitimacy of the state as perhaps the least-questioned institution of our time.

The usual recipe begins with collecting samples of human insecurities. The list could be appallingly long, including over 15 million hunger-related deaths per year, millions of overseas migrant workers and many more millions of their families, millions of pandemic-triggered deaths, and just as many casualties tucked in different parts of the world as victims of “internal strife”. None of these is, as Caroline Thomas (2000: 9) put it, “the product of bad luck”. Something is going seriously wrong. Each of these samples speaks for a breakdown of the system, devised and serviced by the state, by which to deliver the minimum of goods and services for its citizens – of the failure of the state to perform its obligations to its citizens.

There are of course efforts to arrest development of calamitous consequences that presume state-initiated, multilateral policy coordination. The best-known example may be the efforts that produced the Kyoto Protocol against global warming. There are also efforts whose effectiveness might have been seriously hampered without state sanction. The Ottawa Convention against anti-personnel landmines is a good example. Even in these instances, however, the state stands out also for its problematic presence. As evidenced in the US refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, a state acts in the name of “national” interest and this could easily collide with the interests of others who support the protocol, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the whole effort.

These incidents of violent deaths, disrupted lives, and even interference with the efforts to curtail them are illustrative of the breach of contract by the state which people have created as the principal apparatus to secure their lives. It becomes almost futile to speak of the state’s primary obligation to its citizens as resting with the protection of the national border if, at a considerable cost, nothing much else is protected.³

Lessons cannot be drawn, however, from the disastrous examples only. The ordinary life as illuminated in these chapters illustrates the practices of sustaining normal conduct of life with whatever resources available in diffusing, evading, or living with threats of disruption. Where does the role of the state lie, if not in preventing or even causing a disaster, in servicing people’s or communities’ ordinary lives?

The Commission on Human Security (2003: 11) offers a point on questioning the role of the state. As the commission sees it, in the most abstract form of threats to secure and safe life are, or lie, in “events largely beyond [people’s and communities’] control”. This suggests two general spheres of action where the state may play a significant role. One is a reduction of the scope of events beyond people’s control, and the other is an increase in the scope of people’s control over events.

In either of these, however, the role of the state has to be conceived with caution. In the former, the state could easily justify exercising power

in controlling events beyond the small reaches of people and their community, and even beyond the national border. The state can do so, as it has done so often, in the name of protecting the people within and excluding those without. In other words, promotion of the role of the state thus conceived is tantamount to opening the back door to bring the old national security argument back in: the guarding of the wall so that the residents within are immune to the changes or threats without.

There is an alternative approach to events beyond one's control: prompt and thorough grasp of the nature of the events so that they do not stand alien to life within the wall. The role of the state thus conceived is to promote the flow of necessary information so as to remove the ungrounded fear and coordinate the necessary responses to the events across the border. Internally, too, the state can facilitate the dissemination of information across the regions. All protective walls, which may have been built to guard the "residents" within, should not stand in the way of sharing necessary information concerning the nature and origins of threats, and/or how people moderate their impact while appropriating and customizing the benefits of a policy.

The role of the state needs to be *reversed* from closing to opening the national – and regional – borders by promoting the dissemination of necessary information and constructing the infrastructure for it. One important prerequisite for such an infrastructure to work is the presence of international norms which instill among the nations' leaders the consensus that a gain by one is also a gain for the others, and not a loss. Environmental degradation of distant origins, pandemics such as HIV, and widespread toxic agrochemicals are all events whose information cannot be stowed within the walls of concerned nations or regions.

In the latter, the value of the conventional method is undeniable. The goal of formal education and other forms of organized "campaigns" is, among others, to elevate the preparedness – increase the ability – of people and communities to grasp the nature and moderate the impact of disruptive changes in life. However, here too the emphasis needs to be reversed, from one on achievement measured competitively against others to one on achievement that presupposes a positive-sum effect of such efforts with others. After all, the more people are prepared, the less the burden there is for each otherwise-isolated individual or community in confronting, diffusing, evading, or living with the threats to secure and safe life, and the more willing they become to customize whatever impact a policy devised elsewhere has within the context of their own lives.

The state can perform its role thus entertained while it is rooted firmly within the framework of nation-state, as long as it recognizes a different sort of community of people as the beneficiary of its services. It is a

community whose boundary may cut across the regional and national borders, where people are the members of an “imagined community”, as Benedict Anderson (1983) puts it. The cohesion of this imagined community, however, comes not through the sharing of a vernacular language, but through the sharing of similar problems.

The authors of these chapters strongly agree on this final point. After all, their research has taken them to terrains where the observed spoke in the same language of the precarious foundations of life, and how they live it in a manner that is the least inconsistent with what seems to be “normal” to them.

Notes

1. There are recognizable signs, of course, indicative of cautious acceptance, and the accompanying changes in policy orientation, of what these macro-data suggest (Thomas, 2000: chs 6 and 7).
2. Clifford Geertz (1973: 22), in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, argues that “Anthropologists don’t study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods ...); they study in villages.”
3. Mostly monographic, the literature re-examining the role of the state against the need for policy solution is hardly voluminous. Among it, a pioneering work can be found in Dobson and Eckersley’s (2006) *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*.

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