LSE Research Online

Tim Forsyth

Beyond narratives: civic epistemologies and the co-production of environmental knowledge and popular environmentalism in Thailand

Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)

Original citation:
Forsyth, Tim (2018) *Beyond narratives: civic epistemologies and the co-production of environmental knowledge and popular environmentalism in Thailand.* Annals of the American Association of Geographers. ISSN 2469-4452

© 2018 American Association of Geographers

This version available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/90546/

Available in LSE Research Online: November 2018

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

Beyond narratives: civic epistemologies and the co-production of environmental knowledge and popular environmentalism in Thailand

Tim Forsyth
Department of International Development, London School of Economics and Political Science

In press: ***Annals of the Association of American Geographers***
November 2018

Beyond narratives: civic epistemologies and the co-production of environmental knowledge and popular environmentalism in Thailand

Abstract

Popular environmentalism can have limited democratic outcomes if it reproduces structures of social order. This paper seeks to advance understandings of environmental democratization by examining the analytical framework of civic epistemologies as a complement to the current use of environmental narratives in political ecology and Science and Technology Studies (STS). Civic epistemologies are the pre-existing dimensions of political order that the state and/or other actors seek to maintain as unchallengeable. They add to current analysis because they show the structures around which narratives form, as well as how knowledge and political agencies of different actors are co-produced in reductive ways. The paper applies this analysis to popular environmentalism in Thailand and especially concerning community forests and logging from 1968 to present. Using a combination of interviews and content analysis of historic newspaper reporting, the paper shows how diverse actors—including state, elite conservationists, and peasant activists—have organized political activism and ecological claims about forests according to unchallenged norms of appropriate community culture and behavior. These actions have kept narratives about forests and society in place, and worked against alternative and arguably more empowering visions of communities and forests in recent years. The paper argues that revealing civic epistemologies can contribute to a deeper form of environmental democratization than engaging in environmental politics based on existing narratives, or by analyzing the limitations of narratives alone.

Keywords:

Environmentalism, Thailand, Authoritarianism, Political ecology, Science and technology studies

Introduction

A persistent concern at the interface of political ecology and Science and Technology Studies (STS) is the democratizing potential of popular environmentalism under conditions of authoritarianism. Frequently, environmentalism is presented as a democratizing force. Yet, increasingly, scholars acknowledge that it does not always empower marginalized people, but instead can reproduce narratives, which are "devices through which actors are positioned, and through which specific ideas of 'blame' and 'responsibility' and 'urgency' and 'responsible behavior' are attributed" (Hajer 1995, 64-5). Various studies have shown how narratives project simplistic explanations of complex environmental problems while simultaneously ordering social actors into blameworthy or responsible roles (Leach and Mearns 1996; Peet and Watts 2004; Goldman, Nadasdy, and Turner 2011; Lejano, Ingram, and Ingram 2013). Yet, despite the popularity of narratives-based approaches, there is growing concern that these analyses might say too little about how narratives remain powerful, and what can be done to make them more governable. Do narratives gain power because they were established in history and remain unchallenged? Or how do contemporary politics bring authority to different configurations of knowledge and activism?

This paper aims to advance understandings of environmental democratization by examining how the analytical framework of civic epistemologies can give insights to how narratives retain political and epistemic authority in contemporary politics. Civic epistemologies have been defined as "the institutionalized practices by which members of a given society test and deploy knowledge claims used as a basis for making collective choices" (Jasanoff 2005, 255; Miller 2005, 2008). As such, civic epistemologies offer important ways to identify tacit connections between different configurations of evidence, actors, and styles of contestation, and so provide insights for how narratives are made and can be governed. Simultaneously, this paper also seeks to advance debates about civic epistemologies by analyzing the informal, civil society-based, sources of knowledge and expertise within developing countries, and by examining how current political debates adopt, and are influenced by, narratives established in the past.

The paper applies this analysis to Thailand, a country with significant histories of authoritarianism and popular environmentalism. In particular, it focuses in particular on the emergence of communities as a specific category imbued with meaning and agency within forest politics. Much research has examined themes of territorialization and land titling concerning forests and community forests in Thailand (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Chusak and Baird 2018), or the significance of popular environmental protests in resisting oppressive state policy (Hirsch 1996; Fahn 2003; Pye 2005b). But there has been relatively less attention to the configuration and meaning of communities simultaneously with environmental narratives relating to forests (Pinkaew 2005; Atchara 2009; Bencharat 2014). The paper adopts three main methods: first it considers the key characteristics of social order that might shape civic epistemologies relating to communities and forests in Thailand, and how these have influenced environmental narratives about forests. Second, it draws on interviews with activists and observers concerned with civil society and forest politics from the 1990s to present. Third, it uses content analysis of historic newspaper reporting about environmentalism as an indicator of how narratives have formed over time with the selective involvement of different actors, values, and framings. These methods show how popular environmentalism concerning communities and forests has acted as a proxy for democratization under authoritarianism in ways that co-produced simplistic representations of both forests and communities. They also provide insights for understanding civic epistemologies as a template for the co-production of environmental knowledge and agency, and for ways of making these political processes more socially inclusive.

Narratives, co-production and civic epistemologies

It is now widely accepted in geography and environmental social science that explanations of environmental problems and politics sometimes fit convenient patterns that misrepresent complex realities. An alleged example was the tendency of some historic political ecology to adopt an analytical framework that studied the how resource-dependent communities resisted destructive state development projects or unregulated capitalism (Cockburn and Ridgeway 1979; Bryant and Bailey

1997). Later studies, influenced by discourse analysis and STS, sometimes cheekily caricatured this framework as “the good, the bad, and the ugly” for using predefined normative positions to represent communities as good, states bad, and transnational corporations ugly (Béné 2005; Dwyer and Minnegal 2006). This form of predetermined environmental analysis silences knowledge and social identities inconvenient to those norms (Wynne 1996).

Many analysts in political ecology and STS now seek to indicate how the connections between political agency and knowledge are contextual, co-produced, and non-essential (Latour 2005; Jasanoff 2004b). As part of this analysis, scholars have used the framework of environmental narratives or storylines to show how nature and society are ordered together into convenient, but usually misrepresentative, statements of cause-and-effect (Hajer 1995, 64-5). Narratives are problematic because, according to Roe (1991, 288), “[they] tell scenarios not so much about what should happen as about what will happen according to their tellers—if the events or positions are carried out as described.” The concept has been used especially within critical political ecology to show how “received wisdom” (Leach and Mearns 1996) about problems such as desertification or deforestation have been shaped by historic social and political influences on the generation of knowledge (Thompson, Warburton, and Hatley 1986; Forsyth 2003; Bassett, Crummey, and Beusekom 2004; Benjaminsen 2009; Beymer-Farris and Bassett 2013). More generally, however, the framework of narratives has been a link between discourse analysis and STS to show how the identity and expected agency of social actors are shaped simultaneously with authoritative knowledge about environmental problems (Ku and Tian 2002; Miller 2012).[1]

Over time, STS scholars have expanded this approach to the related frameworks of assemblages and actor networks, which, according to Latour (2005, 55) has “borrowed from narrative theories” (Rodríguez-Giralt, Marrero-Guillamón, and Milstein 2018, 257). Narratives, actor networks, and assemblages share the common purpose of showing how configurations of contexts, actors, and knowledge—often forged through historic entanglements—have become stabilized in common discourse and scientific and institutional practices as unquestioned truths. Narrative analysis shows how environmental problems are represented in terms of overly simple statements of cause-and-effect. Actor network theory refers to this process as purification, but makes the additional point that both problems and actors exist because of their relationship to each other rather than their essential qualities (Akrich and Latour 1992). Indeed, insights from assemblage theory have been used in studies of forest history (Peluso and Vandergeest 2011) and agroforestry policies (Smith and Dressler 2017) in Southeast Asia.

Yet, despite the popularity of these frameworks, there is also growing concern that current approaches to narratives undertheorize the role of contemporary politics in co-producing political and epistemic authority
(Hajer 2009; Jasanoff 2004a). First, critics have argued that narratives should not just be seen as ordering devices for interconnections between society and environment, but also advance explanations for how these interpretations arise (Jones and Radaelli 2015; Lejano 2015). This argument reflects a broader debate about whether discourse analysis in political research should show how language facilitates different arguments, versus its role in shaping supposedly "real" visions of the world (Feindt and Oels 2005; Hajer and Versteeg 2005).

Secondly, other scholars have asked whether assemblages and actor networks have tended to over-emphasize the fixity of historical events, interests, and networks in shaping knowledge and social actors (Latour 2005, 75; Müller and Schurr 2016, 220). Doing this might undertheorize the co-production of knowledge and social agency because it implies that narratives act in a historically deterministic way on current politics, rather than examining how contemporary politics use narratives in selective ways. Accordingly, critics prefer to analyze how knowledge and actors gain or lose political saliency dynamically, according to how they benefit from or invoke sources of authority that lie outside of the specific events, interests, and networks outlined in narratives (Law and Singleton 2005; Anderson et al. 2012). Indeed, Jasanoff (2004, 19) states: "co-productionist accounts.. are not content simply to ask what *is*; they seek to understand how particular states of knowledge are arrived at and held in place, or abandoned" (emphasis in original).

Civic epistemologies is one analytical framework that aims to show how knowledge and actors gain saliency within narratives (Jasanoff 2005, 255; Miller 2005, 2008). These describe the:

> "ways of knowing and reasoning about policy problems intertwined with ways of organizing political order. These knowledge orders are reasonably stable, in that they persist over relatively long periods of time, often embedded in institutionalized epistemic, social, and political practices. But, they are also dynamic: open to change through novel processes of co-production that link epistemic, social, and political contestation and innovation" (Miller 2008, 1898).

Civic epistemologies add to the debate by indicating the rules or structures of authority that make both knowledge and activism influential, and hence allows the analysis of current practices that make or reproduce narratives. They also refer to the political influences on these structures, the so-called "knowledge orders" that create norms of appropriate discussion (Jung, Korinek, and Straßheim 2014), or "the dimensions of political order that each state seeks to immunize or hold beyond question" (Jasanoff 2012, 10). These unchallenged themes within political debate influence how actors form common identities; adopt different standards of evidence, knowledge, and activism; and maintain or challenge social hierarchies. For example, civic epistemologies contribute to shared visions of reality through helping to facilitate discourse coalitions because different political actors who disagree on cognitive points of interest, but who share the same perspective on other themes (Hajer 1995; Hajer, van den Brink, and Metze 2006, 70). Discourse coalitions often result in unseen acts of worldmaking (Goodman 1978), or what Law (2011) calls "collateral realities" that impose unquestioned visions of cause-and-effect for environmental problems in exclusionary ways. They also influence which events or actions are considered as acceptable evidence of cause-and-effect in practice.

Yet, civic epistemologies can also be questioned. First, much analysis so far has focused on "national cultures of rationality" (Winickoff 2012, x) that refer to the formal means of resolving conflicts such as lawsuits in the USA, or spokespeople from trusted institutions in Germany (Jasanoff 2005, 262).

(The political debate to hold the British European referendum as beyond reproach is possibly another example). Yet, critics have questioned whether these national epistemologies are too general (Barry 2012), or whether they leave sufficient space for less formal, or non-state forms of civic epistemologies (Beck and Forsyth 2015). These concerns are especially relevant for popular environmentalism, which is usually characterized by social divisions and different values, as well as being a proxy for other forms of democratization under authoritarianism (Tickle and Welsh 1998).

Second, there is also a need to understand how civic epistemologies can be reframed through popular activism. Some research has shown, for example, how alliances between social movements and scientific institutions in the USA have succeeded in diversifying treatments for breast cancer (Batt 1994; Ley 2009), or reframing HIV research from slowing the spread of the virus, to improving the lives of people with it (Epstein 1996). These examples of social movements are different to others because they have sought to transform the way formal scientific knowledge is generated. There has been relatively little research, however, on how social movements engage with civic epistemologies in developing world contexts, and therefore might transform (rather than enact) narratives.

The study

This paper presents research on popular environmentalism concerning communities and forests in Thailand from the late 1960s to present. It asks:

- How has environmentalism expressed narratives about the problems, role, and impacts of communities concerning forest policies?
- How do these narratives indicate the influence of civic epistemologies on environmental activism?
- What are the insights for understanding civic epistemologies as an academic framework, and for contributing to environmental democratization?

The paper first reviews the challenges of understanding community in Thailand, and evidence for civic epistemologies within this debate. It then analyses how environmental activism about communities and forests in Thailand has been influenced by civic epistemologies. It then discusses evidence for how civic epistemologies can be reframed.

As the paper seeks to investigate civic epistemologies, the research analyzes the development of activism over time rather than an in-depth or ethnographic analysis of one or more cases. The analysis starts in the late 1960s because this is when environmentalism became an identifiable political concern in Thailand. It initially refers to logging as the main concern of the 1970s and 1980s, which led to a national logging ban in 1989. After this period, the paper refers mainly to the debate about community forests as the legal framework determining local rights over forest land. As noted before, there is much existing literature on the history and challenges of community forests, and their relationship with statemaking and land titling (Vandergeest 1996; Sato 2003; Salam, Noguchi, and Pothitan 2006; Vandergeest and Peluso 2006; Atchara 2009; Usher 2009; Ting et al. 2011; Bencharat 2014; Forsyth and Walker 2014; Chusak and Baird 2018). This paper, instead, focuses more upon the meaning and representation of communities within environmentalism about forests as a way to understand civic epistemologies.

The paper's primary empirical content is a combination of original interviews with environmental activists and analysts in Thailand, and content analysis of historic newspapers as a way to indicate how narratives about communities and forests emerged. Indeed, it has been widely noted that "journalism is history's first draft,"[2] and so tracing narratives in newspapers offers a useful insight for how the values, framings, and actors involved. In particular, the study compared the two key search terms of "logging" and "community forest bill(s)" for different periods: 1968-2000 for logging and 1993-2017 for community forest bill(s). These different terms and dates were selected because the *Bangkok Post* database did not refer to community forests before 1993; and the physical (paper-based) records for logging ended in 2000, requiring a different system of online searching for news after

2000.[3] Before 1993, all news about forests including concerns about communities, conservation, and ecology, were accumulated under the single label of logging. The later focus on community forest bill(s) referred to all reports about events and developments relating to community action concerning forests, as well as the national discussions about appropriate forms of community forests legislation. Comparison these two themes over different, but overlapping, time periods was the most effective way to show how narratives about communities and forests changed over time.

The *Bangkok Post* was selected because it is Thailand's oldest broadsheet; it is also written in English for Thai readers, which facilitated fast reading.[4] It also has an archive collection of historic news reports going back to the 1960s, which were already organized into different subject themes, and thus followed the newspaper's own logic of organization. At the same time, using the *Bangkok Post* also posed dilemmas: it is by no means a neutral nor uncensored publication (McCargo 2000); its reports also reflect the interests of the elite Thai journalists working for it.[5] Yet, at the same time, the purpose of narrative analysis is to study what is reported, rather than to pretend there is a clear and unquestioned version of each storyline. It should be noted that it was relatively more difficult to use the second English-language Thai broadsheet, *The Nation* because this newspaper did not have the same accessible archive; it has a smaller circulation; plus its environment section was edited by a US citizen during the 1990s (Fahn 2003), whereas the *Bangkok Post* was almost totally written by Thais. On the balance of these factors, the *Bangkok Post* was a valuable historical resource to use alongside interviews in order to trace public debate, and how community activism was linked to different knowledge claims.

The method for conducting the content analysis is described in Forsyth (2007). Newspaper reports were grouped together using the *Bangkok Post*'s own classification system, and then each report was analyzed to identify the number and identity of actors reported (classified into broad categories of community-representatives, national conservation groups, formal expert organizations, government, etc.), and then to record the underlying frames or discourses contained in each story (such as whether the report emphasized ecological fragility, risks to local people and livelihoods, strength of community, democratization, state failure, and so on).

Authoritarianism and community politics in Thailand

Thailand has become both a byword for environmental concern, and democratic worries. Since its establishment as a modern state in 1932, Thailand has experienced 12 coups; seven attempted coups; 25 general elections; and four major occasions when soldiers or paramilitaries shot and killed protestors urging greater democracy. Meanwhile, the World Bank has called Thailand "one of the great development success stories,"[6] on account of its rapid economic growth. Environmentalism has blossomed, partly out of concern for the degradation of forests, coasts and city environments (Anat 1988), but also because environmentalism has acted as a proxy for democratic activism under military regimes (Fahn 2003; Hirsch 1996). Authoritarianism still persists: in 2006 and 2014, military forces overthrew democratically elected governments. Between these coups, Thailand also became embroiled in conflicts between different political alliances called Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts, who represented respectively supporters of the deposed prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, and more royalist critics of Thaksin (Pasuk and Baker 2010). In 2016, the widely respected King Bhumibhol died after a reign of 70 years. Criticisms of the monarchy are severely curtailed: one man who made a sarcastic Facebook comment about one of the King's dogs was arrested in 2015 with the prospect of a long sentence.[7] Another man accused of sending four offensive SMS messages about the royalty was denied bail on eight occasions, and died in prison of liver cancer in 2012 while serving a 20-year sentence.[8] Since the 2014 coup, all public political protests have been restricted.

Some of the factors underlying authoritarianism can be described as forms of civic epistemologies, in both formal and informal ways. During the Cold War, anti-insurgency concerns led the then prime minister Sarit Thanarat to insist upon a form of democratic debate based on traditional Thai society, and policy decisions centralized within central government (Saneh 2006, 194; Bencharat 2014, 43). These factors contributed, according to Haberkorn (2011), to the failure of revolutionary movements during the 1960s. In October 1973, the military government cracked down by shooting student democracy activists in Bangkok. This event led to the fall of the government, and the installation of a more progressive regime, with experiments in local democratization. But in October 1976, paramilitary groups again killed students in Bangkok; a further coup happened; and Thailand experienced authoritarian military rule until 1988. In 1976, a well-known Buddhist monk, Phra Kittivuddho pronounced that "killing communists is not demeritorious" (Haberkorn 2011, 131). During this period, many Thais feared that they too would become communist, following the conversion of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Indeed, various analysts have argued that this fear contributed to many Thais accepting the coup and resulting authoritarianism (Thongchai 1994; Glassman 2004; Ji 2006).

Against the background of war and the fear of revolution, the concept of community has had a contested history. In particular, the long-standing philosophy of "community culture" in Thailand organized the perception of rural communities along moral grounds of "sharing, taking turn to work for each other, non-exploitation of each other, and righteousness" (Bamrung 1984, 238; Chatthip 1991b, 1991a ; Bencharat 2014, 124). Some analysts have argued that community culture is empowering to villagers (Seri 1986; Hewison 1993). Critics, however, have called the philosophy essentialist and nostalgic, and have alleged it represents a form of conservative nationalism that opposes democratization or engagement with capitalism by villagers (Rigg 1991; Thongchai 2008, 589; Reynolds 2013). A related framework is the Sufficiency Economy promoted by King Bhumibhol that discusses ways of engaging in modern living without greed (Prasopchoke 2010).

These ideas about communities have also affected the relationships, or indeed alliances, between rural villagers and urban or elite members of Thai society. Chatthip Nartsupha, one philosopher most associated with community culture, called for "a progressive bourgeoisie" in the 1980s -1990s to work with the peasantry to "overthrow the parasitic capitalism that develops from exploitation of the countryside, develop industrial capitalism, and allow the countryside to remain in its old state" (Chatthip 1991a, 58). Critics, however, have argued that community development is not a gift but a right (Vandergeest 1991), and that the kind of assistance offered under community culture was a form of anti-insurgency control (Kanok 1981; Quinn 1997; Atchara 2014; Bencharat 2014, 44).

These debates suggest that community politics reflected class-based divisions in Thai society. But class remains a controversial theme. Some analysts have argued that the clashes between Red and Yellow Shirts since 2005 was “a growing class war between the urban and rural poor and the old elites” (Ji 2009, 83), or a “script deftly managed by the conservative ‘royalist’ establishment” to block populist voting (Glassman 2010; Bello 2014, 1). Others have preferred to use specifically Thai concepts of hierarchy—for example, the word *phrai* was used under times of the absolute monarchy to mean “commoner” in contrast to *amartaya* (“elite”) (Ferrara 2014, 35). A similar, informal, phrase *siwilai* (literally: “civilize”) also differentiated less-civilized *chao bannok* (rural people) or *pu-noi* (“little” people) and the more advanced *chao muang* (city people) (Anan 1984; Thongchai 2000). Nonetheless, as the next section shows, questions of social difference have influenced how communities have been represented in environmental politics.

(a) Communities and forest-based activism

For some analysts, rural communities have played a key role in environmentalism in Thailand, partly because these activists greatly outnumber middle classes (Fahn 2003, 7). These statements, however, hide the symbolism and tensions involved in both communities and forests that have affected the relationship of environmentalism and democratization. First, as discussed above, the term, community invokes images of appropriate social order and tradition. Second, forests also carry concerns about historic security threats and political instability. Since the late 1950s, Thai governments demarcated conservation forests as part of their anti-insurgency measures (Peluso and Vandergeest 2011). During the final years of the Vietnam War, and afterwards, in the 1970s-1980s, successive governments closed public access to forest zones to protect against the spread of communism. Indeed, after the 1976 coup, opponents to the military regime, including the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), established camps in forest zones. Forests therefore came to signify resistance and political insecurity.

According to one ex-Senator and campaigner for social development: “I don’t see the words ‘fleeing to the jungle’ to mean ‘forest’… the jungle was a euphemism for the CPT stronghold.”[9]

The combined histories of communities and forests in Thailand therefore created templates for the later development of community-based forest activism. At first, communities in zones demarcated as forest sought to gain extra recognition for social and economic development. But over time, two competing narratives developed. On one hand, communities, could benefit strategically by framing themselves as traditional and appropriate forest users (Bencharat 2014, 13). On the other hand, they could also be accused of encroaching into protected areas, and rejecting the appropriate community role expected of them (Pye 2005a). Predefined visions of community culture and forests therefore provided forms of civic epistemologies against which villagers’ activities were seen and judged.

These tensions were shown in the years between 1973-1976 when Thailand’s military rule relaxed. During this time, a progressive organization called the Campaign for Dissemination of Democracy project encouraged some 3,000 students to visit rural areas (this group arguably constituted Chatthip’s “progressive bourgeoisie”); and the Farmers’ Federation of Thailand (FFT) was established in 1974. These groups worked to demand rural development, and to support villagers who had reoccupied farming land previously claimed for conservation.[10] Critics, however, claimed that students were assisting farmers to become encroachers.[11] Meanwhile, between March 1974 and September 1979, 33 leaders of the FFT were assassinated, with a further eight seriously injured, and five more disappeared (Haberkorn, 2011, p. 106).

Environmental conflicts, however, became more prominent during the 1980s, and were driven by a wider range of concerns. First, there was continued opposition to government-based expansion of tree plantations (especially eucalyptus) in the northeast of Thailand.[12] Second, there was growing public concern about unregulated logging, especially by the army, politicians, or connected businesses.[13] And thirdly, there was an international campaign to halt the construction of a World Bank-financed dam in the Nam Choan rainforests of western Thailand (Hirsch and Lohmann 1989; Hirsch 1993;

Chusak 2008; Chusak and Baird 2018, 322). Activism about forests therefore became to represent various aspects of democratization, and this public dissent led to a period of significant change in the late 1980s: the postponement of the Nam Choan dam (1988), the passing of a national ban on logging (1989), and the re-introduction of general elections (1988, until a further coup in 1991).

The period following the logging ban, however, demonstrated a return to the tensions concerning communities and forest. In the early 1990s the apparent alliance between community activists and conservation groups continued in opposition to the so-called Khor Jor Kor program of reforestation and enforced resettlement in the northeast of Thailand (Pye 2005b). But during the later 1990s, divisions emerged between activities seeking to establish new legislation to define how local people can use forests in the wake of the logging ban, and other campaigns to protect forests against alleged irresponsible encroachment or degradation from commercial activities such as mining or tourism (Pinkaew and Rajesh 1992). These tensions were seen most prominently in discussions about legislation for community forests. Various analysts trace the origin of debates about community forests to research started by Saneh and Yos (1993), which emphasized ideas dating back to community culture (Attajak 2005; Bencharat 2014, 121). Simultaneously, community activists began to form social movement organizations such as the Assembly of Isaan (northeast) Farmers for Land Rights and Improvement of Natural Resources, the Northern Farmers Movement, and, by 1995, an overarching Assembly of the Poor (AOP) (Missingham 2003). The AOP promoted various concerns including community rights, opposition to dams (including, most prominently, the Pak Mul dam near the Thai-Laos border), and the health and welfare of factory workers and slum dwellers (Prapart 1998; Baker 2000). Thailand's new constitution of 1997 added to this movement by confirming the rights of local people to participate in decisions about infrastructure and natural resources (later constitutions in 2007, 2014, and 2017 reduced this statement).

The debate about community forests legislation included various draft bills. A "People's Version" of the bill was proposed in 1993, based on consultations with the Local Development Institute and Project for Ecological Recovery (two NGOs linked to community rights); the NGO coordinating committee (NGO-CORD); and various village representatives, academics, and foresters (Anonymous no date). This bill was then followed by alternative drafts from the Royal Forest Department (RFD) in 1995, and two further versions before a draft was approved by the Cabinet in 1997. This bill stated that villagers living in conservation forest areas could only request a community forest if they had lived in the area at least five years before the Community Forest Act, and could "possess behavior which indicates a culture or harmony with forest conservation." A final bill was passed into law in 2007, but stated that community forest rights do not also confer land rights (RECOFTC 2011; Bencharat 2014, 192, 213). The implications of these terms for environmental democratization and civic epistemologies are discussed in the next sections.

(b) Co-producing knowledge and agency

Despite the activism described above, and the claims that environmentalism in Thailand is socially inclusive (Hirsch 1997; Fahn 2003), there is one shocking fact: "every community forest bill drafted, including the two so-called people's version bills, prohibits the occupation of, and farming and living on community forest land" (Bencharat 2014, 212). How did this exclusionary outcome happen?

This section presents information from the content analysis of historic *Bangkok Post* reporting for logging and community forests. As discussed above, this analysis summarizes how different news stories relating to logging and community forests were framed in terms of democratization in general (including the success of community activism); worries about the state (such as corruption); or public approval of the state (such as success in implementing laws). Figure 1 shows activities related to logging (as defined by the newspaper itself) between 1968-2000, which includes political disputes, community action, conflicts over encroachment and conservation, and the timber trade. Figure 2 shows reports specifically mentioning community forest bills (including debates and activism) between 1993-2017.[14] These figures show changes in the narratives concerning communities and forest, and can be used alongside other information such as interviews.

[FIGURES 1 AND 2 AROUND HERE]

Figure 1a shows how far news about logging between 1968-2000 were framed in terms of democratization, state failure, or state success. This chart shows a sudden increase in themes relating to democratization and state success during the period 1973-1976 when military rule was relaxed. After the 1976 crackdown, newspaper reporting returned to criticizing the government for alleged failures, although this trend declined immediately after the 1991 coup (possibly because of censorship). Newspapers reported increases in public approval of the state ("state success") in the mid-1980s and mid-1990s largely because of reports about state action to stamp out corruption or illegal logging at the time. (Of course, this reporting did not mean that illegal logging stopped during these periods).

Figure 1b shows that logging in general, however, was represented during this period as more of a threat to ecology (meaning impact on water, wildlife, and heritage) than livelihoods or community rights. Despite this framing, Figure 1c shows the actual number of community actors reported in news remained more or less equivalent to elite or national conservation groups during this time, although state actors (such as the Royal Forest Department or ministers) had greatest prominence in day-to-day reporting about logging.

Figure 1d, however, focuses on *how* communities were represented. In keeping with the structure of narratives (Hajer 1995, 64-5), communities were sometimes portrayed as irresponsible (such as when they were blamed for illegal encroachment) or as victims (when they were affected by insensitive state resettlement policies, or by illegal logging). Figure 1d shows that the representation of communities as irresponsible was highest during the 1970s, including between 1973-1976. This finding is in contrast to Figure 1a that showed an increase in themes of democratization during 1973-1976. This apparent tension probably demonstrates the effect indicated in Figure 1b: newspapers framed community-based activism as democratizing when it sought to protect forests, but activism to increase access to forest land was reported as irresponsible. During the 1980s-90s, however, new reports increasingly referred to communities as victims while criticisms of illegal logging and the state in general were growing.

Figure 2 shows similar information for debates about community forest bills 1993-2017. This figure, however, shows a different set of trends. Most strikingly, the diagrams in Figure 2 show that the community forests bill narrative as a story of successful state action and democratization (Figure 2a). The main challenge to be addressed was threats to forest ecology; indeed, threats to livelihoods were not discussed (Figure 2b). Yet, despite the lack of attention to local livelihoods, community actors were reported more or less as frequently as state actors and conservation groups (Figure 2c). Throughout this time, communities were predominantly (and increasingly) represented as victims rather than irresponsible (Figure 2d). Together, Figures 2c and 2d indicate that communities were only represented in news reporting about community forests in terms of victims, and as part of a narrative about protecting forest ecology, rather than in terms of concerns about access to land and agriculture in zones demarcated as forest.

The comparison of Figures 1 and 2 shows that logging during the 1970s and 1980s was a source of diverse concerns, but by the 1990s-2000s, the discussion of community and forests had become largely defined by predefined framings of what forests and communities meant. In turn, these definitions framed environmental democratization in terms of protecting a certain type of community in an allegedly common of objective of protesting forests, rather than according to a wider range of democratic objectives or options for forest landscapes. There is also evidence that different actors also contributed to this narrative about communities and forests.

First, it worth noting that various conflicts where villagers asserted rights to livelihoods, or seeking to occupy conservation forest land, were not reported as relevant to debates about community forests legislation. For example, in the Dongyai forest of Buriram province in the northeast, villagers engaged in various acts of resistance against state-enforced eucalyptus plantations on land used by local people from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. Most famously, villagers, led by a monk, Phra

Phrachak Khuttachitto, cut down 200,000 plantation saplings and set fire to the offices of the Royal Forest Department (Rajesh 1992; Magagnini 1994; Pye 2005a, 329). In March 1994, the *Bangkok Post* published 21 stories about government actions to resettle people in this district. The most common frame adopted in these reports were the tensions between seeing these people as either illegal or as victims (roughly 30 percent of all frames). But at no point was the forest policy itself questioned; indeed, the second most-common frame was of the state successfully implementing policy (15 percent). In another example, villagers were accused of encroaching on protected forest land in Dong Larn, also in the northeast, which had been demarcated as reserved forest land since 1964 (Ayuwat 1993). In the 1990s, the government asked these people to leave. Between 1996-99, the *Bangkok Post* published 242 stories on this topic, where the main framing were tensions between successful implementation of government resettlement policy (27 percent of all frames) versus whether the state was overly forceful (17 percent). None of these reports were connected to debates about the community forests bill(s). These and other examples provide evidence that the narrative of communities and forests excluded communities considered to be acting unlawfully. This pre-ordering of cases of community activism is further evidence of a civic epistemology that excludes these kinds of cases from debate about community forests, and whether plantation forests on agricultural land are indeed appropriate forms of forest policy.

Second, there is also evidence that community activists fed the narrative themselves by framing their activities strategically to emphasize the role of communities as forest protectors (Forsyth and Walker 2008; Lohmann 1995). For example, an NGO called the Community Love Forest Project was formed in northern Thailand in 1995 with the objective of changing the perception of middle class groups (Bencharat 2014, 145). Communities also participated in forest ordination, where trees were wrapped in saffron robes of Buddhist monks to dissuade loggers. In 1996, the Northern Farmer Federation launched a campaign to ordain 50 million trees in honor of King Bhumibhol’s 50th anniversary (Darlington 2012). Sometimes community actors also used these actions to legitimize alternative demands for development. Indeed, at a protest outside Chiang Mai provincial hall in 1999 organized by the Assembly of the Poor, community activists held banners showing images of villagers demanding the right to participate in decisions about natural resources with their fists raised. In the background, meanwhile, the banner carefully added pictures of undisturbed forest and an ordained tree as a nod to more orthodox concerns about conservation.[15] Other posters and murals at the time also emphasized the royal initiatives for reforestation, and the alleged connections between forests and lowland water supply.

Third, other activists also represented communities and forests in this way, and sometimes in terms akin to the broader philosophies of community culture and sufficiency economy (as discussed above). In particular, these viewpoints rejected capitalism, and championed traditional values and local ecological wisdom. For example, Wanida Tantiwittayapitak was a prominent member of the Assembly of the Poor (AOP). In one interview, she justified the protection of both forests and community on the basis by counter-posing them to capitalist investment:

> "The poor people can live with the forest. Poor people eat, but not a lot. They must respect nature and trees. … If they live in the forest margins, they can use the forest for food. It is better to give the forest to the poor people than to investors from Singapore, Japan, Taiwanese or Farang [westerners]... OK, villagers may use the forest to plant rice, but you must ask why, but the investors plant cabbage and this is a problem."[16]

Similarly, Baramee Chiyarat is a current representative of the AOP. He was keen to state that community statements about forests are not simply tactics:

> "It is very normal that people who live with nature take care of nature. For example, making offerings to spirits of forest and water. It is a long tradition. Caring for nature is not a tactic but the way of communicating this *is* the tactic."[17]

Nonetheless, some critics have identified a trend in reporting communities in these terms. In particular, Walker (2001) has argued that there is a "consensus" about representing the Karen ethnic minority on the Thai-Myanmar borders that portrays this group as closer to nature because they adopt traditional shifting cultivation that allows forest regeneration, and make offerings to spirits of forest and water. Indeed, the *Bangkok Post* once referred to this people as “naturally peace-loving and docile.”[18] Walker proposes this representation arose from the debate about community forests, where both conservation and development groups wish to find examples of people who can both live in forest zones, yet also show appropriate appreciation of forest conservation (Walker 2004; Usher 2009, 109). This representation, however, does not reflect the majority of Karen livelihoods today.[19]

The effect of these representations, however, is to reinforce two discourse coalitions about communities and forests that produce their own exclusionary, or collateral realities (Law 2011). First, there is an overriding representation of ecology as fragile, and especially concerning the role of forests (and reforestation) as necessary for ecosystem services such as rainfall and the avoidance of droughts, despite evidence from research in and outside Thailand that shows these statements are more complex or even challengeable (Alford 1992; ; Calder 1999; Bruijnzeel 2004; Forsyth and Walker 2008). Second, rural people tend to be represented as communities only in terms of tradition, or an existence outside commercialization and modernity (e.g. Fahn 2003).[20] These two perceptions can sometimes feed each other: for example, in one interview with the conservation group, the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation in 1999, the director stated that the entire territory of Thailand had been covered with forest in the early 20th century, and it was the job of conservationists to restore this cover.[21]

Together, these factors reduce debate about potential options for agriculture or commercial advancement by rural villagers, and create a new form of “good, bad, and ugly” structure to allocate social roles under environmentalism. As Baker (2000, 6) notes, “civil society is a slippery term, and in the late 1990s [in Thailand] was often appropriated for a particular urban and middle-class view of political change.”

(c) Following and reforming civic epistemologies

The implication of the discussion above is that the representation of communities and forests in Thailand have followed narratives, but that these narratives have been structured by pre-existing cultural norms that have acted as civic epistemologies because they have predetermined which kinds of knowledge, actors, and forms of activism carry political and epistemic authority. In particular, these norms have related to ideas about community culture, which reflect social hierarchies between elites and commoners, and these have reinforced traditional ideas about communities and their relationship to nature. They also exclude certain kinds of community activism as either appropriate forms of environmentalism, or as counting towards the negotiation of community forests

Various analysts have pointed out that the community forests debate has "reflected the social reality of division between urban-based elite classes and rural based farmer classes in Thai society" (Chusak and Baird 2018, 322). This statement is too simple: it hides the ways in which community activists have used these norms as short-term tactics to gain political advantage, but that doing so has also reinforced the underlying ideas that limit rural development. In other words, civic epistemologies are shared by different actors, and shape both the knowledge and agency expressed by them.

Can civic epistemologies be reformed? Since the community forests debates of the 1990s, various significant changes have occurred in Thailand. Between 2001-06, a new prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra introduced a new style of populist politics based upon harnessing rural voters. Thaksin was then deposed by a coup in 2006, which was followed by conflicts between Red and Yellow Shirts until a further coup in 2014. During this time, the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) also declined, partly because Thaksin's regime offered an alternative arena for politics, but also because of internal divisions and the death of leading activists in the AOP.[22]

Thaksin's policies have been described as challenging the traditional vision of community culture because they introduced economic opportunities and liberalization to farming communities (McCargo and Ukrit 2005). For example, the one million baht fund for village development, and the One Tambol One Product (OTOP) program gave villagers money for infrastructure development and encouraged local districts to trade directly with markets (Baker 2016). At the same time, these policies also inspired resistance from critics apparently motivated by traditional ideas of community culture. For example, Thaksin was accused of "pushing capitalism into rural areas,"[23] or, as noted by one *Bangkok Post* editor: "As a baby of ruthless globalization, Mr. Thaksin's victory spells doom for the environment and the rural poor. Believing that money has no nationality, he will continue to sell the natural environment to the highest bidder at the cost of the villagers' livelihood and environmental destruction."[24] Various analysts have linked Thaksin to financial corruption (McCargo and Ukrit 2005; Pasuk and Baker 2010).

Reforming civic epistemologies is likely to be difficult because, as noted above, they are knowledge orders stabilized in institutionalized epistemic and political practices (Miller 2008). For example, one social commentator in Thailand explained that the legacy of mistrust against a "leftist" agenda in Thailand made it difficult to define environmentalism in terms of poverty and access to livelihoods.[25] Yet, seeking to diversify knowledge production might also reproduce old structures. For example, the *Thai Baan* (or Thai Village) research initiative was introduced during the 2000s to increase the space for villagers to participate in knowledge generation about local ecology, as a way to influence policy, and to empower community development. It has especially been used in researching fish species in sites where dams have been proposed (Friend 2009).[26] This work has clearly created new knowledge and represented community members as local experts about environment. Yet simultaneously, Thai Ban has been criticized for allegedly being insensitive to how its practices also co-produce traditional "subsistence narratives" about community livelihoods, similar to the Karen consensus, rather than fighting for access to markets or other socio-economic change (Lamb 2018). The desire to resist projects such as dams can therefore reproduce narratives about appropriate community life.

It is also important to emphasize that authoritarianism is still strong in Thailand and has grown since the 2014 coup. The 2007 constitution rolled back many of the public consultation provisions in the

1997 constitution. The new constitution of 2014 went further by introducing Section 44, which gives the government executive freedom to issue any order for the sake of reform or social progress. On top of this the government has reasserted its objective to restore Thailand’s forest reserve land to 25% of national territory, leading to evictions. Much of these evictions are not reported in national newspapers (Kongpob 2017). It is not surprising then, that rural actors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) might act in accordance with pre-existing roles. For example, when the government proposed to build the Kaeng Sua Ten dam in the northern province of Phrae in 2012, activists held a rally where villagers ordained trees, and used both red and yellow colors in order to portray themselves as traditional and unchallenging.[27]

Some critics, however, adopt a more critical tone. According to some observers, Thai NGOs are now mainly “tools of the junta” (Pinkaew 2017), or indeed that “NGOs just want the government to solve their problems and don’t mind if the military regime takes over the country.”[28] This is fighting talk: yet these critics are referring to the old debate that Thai concepts of community culture lead people to see community development as gifts rather than rights (Chatthip 1991; Vandergeest 1991). It could be, with the sudden increase in authoritarianism following the 2014 coup, that public discussions of communities and forests have resorted to familiar narratives rather than seeking to change deeper social hierarchies.

Conclusion: interpreting civic epistemologies

This paper has sought to advance debates about environmental democratization by showing the influence of civic epistemologies as a way to show how narratives produce simplified and exclusionary explanations of environmental politics. The paper has shown that, in Thailand, civic epistemologies are constituted by long-standing ideas of community culture and social hierarchies that have defined visions of appropriate rural life. These visions have been strengthened through worries about national security in rural areas, and by a perception of forests and traditional lifestyles as threatened by modern economic growth. These epistemologies act as knowledge orders by qualifying which kinds of environmentalism or community activism are seen as relevant to debates about forests; and which kinds of knowledge claims are considered appropriate. Accordingly, popular environmentalism frequently results in reinforcing predefined ideas about the ecological functions of forests, and the characteristics of communities, that can be considered simplistic and exclusionary.

What lessons can this paper show for implementing civic epistemologies in environmental analysis? Three conclusions can be made.

First, this paper adds to the literature that argues that environmental democratization should not be understood in terms of clashes between actors but on what actors create together (Hajer 1995; Wynne 1996). For this reason, there should be caution about seeing community-based activism as necessarily progressive, but instead to see how activism contributes to existing social orders. The analysis of civic epistemologies show the templates and areas of commonality that are often not apparent, but which influence how community activism proceeds. This paper has shown this is important for Thailand. As Bowie (1992) and Walker (2014, 203) have noted, there is an "uncanny resemblance between leftist and royalist prescriptions for rural society, both drawn to images of an authentically Thai village in which local production systems and local culture and mutually reinforcing."

Second, the analysis of civic epistemologies demonstrates a larger role for contemporary politics in shaping and using narratives. There is a tendency to see narratives (especially if interpreted as assemblages) as historically deterministic where current politics is shaped by hybrid facts and norms melded in the past (Law and Singleton 2005; Müller and Schurr 2016): for example concerning the role of counter-insurgency in shaping definitions or demarcation of forests (Peluso and Vandergeest 2011). A focus on civic epistemologies opens space to consider how current politics might select and repeat narratives more dynamically: for example, how contemporary actors use history selectively to create modern myths or stereotypical interpretations of the past, such as Thailand's frameworks of community culture or sufficiency economy. Focusing more on the present also allows researchers to ask whether narratives are summaries of how alleged truth claims were made in the past, or whether they are indications of how meaning is projected onto diverse and contested events in the past and present? If so, then it is important to ask who controls narratives? This paper has assumed that newspapers shape narratives because (so the saying goes), journalism is history's first draft, and indeed in many cases it is the only written record. But it remains a testing question how far the received wisdom of narratives (Leach and Mearns 1996) is made, and how it becomes unchallenged.

Third, there is also a need to consider academics' own roles in maintaining civic epistemologies and narratives. Much of the problems of the so-called "good, bad, and ugly" approach to environmental politics arise from an unexamined application of normative agendas to complex problems, which give rise to narratives. Indeed, in Thailand, some academics have resisted calls to deconstruct narratives, asking whether these constitute "an attack" on community rights (Pinkaew 2009). Indeed, Latour (2005, 61) stated: "Social scientists have too often confused their role of analyst with some sort of political call for discipline and emancipation."

The objective of understanding civic epistemologies is to investigate the formal or informal political processes that lead to dimensions of political order being held beyond question (Miller 2005, 1896; Jasanoff 2012, 10). Accordingly, one starting point is for analysts to consider how their own normative positions co-produce different observations, and vice versa. Highlighting civic epistemologies is a way to shift the analysis of environmental democratization away from tacit narratives, or on the narratives themselves, towards an understanding of why narratives emerge and remain unchallenged.

REFERENCES

Akrich, M., and B. Latour. 1992. A summary of a convenient vocabulary for ther semiotics of human and nonhuman assemblies. In *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, eds. E. W. Bijker and J. Law, 259-264. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Alford, D. 1992. Streamflow and sediment transport from mountain watersheds of the Chao Phraya Basin, northern Thailand: a reconnaissance study. *Mountain Research and Development* 12 (3):237-268.

Anan, G. 1984. 'The idiom of Phii Ka': peasant conception of class differentiation in northern Thailand. *Mankind* 14 (4):325-329.

Anat, A. 1988. *Thailand : natural resources profile*. Singapore and Oxford: Thailand Development Research Institute and Oxford University Press.

Anderson, B., M. Kearnes, C. McFarlane, and D. Swanton. 2012. On assemblages and geography. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 2:171–89.

Anonymous. no date. Draft community forest laws: Differences between the People's Version and the Government Versions [in Thai]. In *Project for Ecological Recovery*. Bangkok.

Atchara, R. 2009. Constructing the meanings of land, resource, and a community in the context of globalization, The Graduate School, Chiang Mai University.

———. 2014. Kanmuang khong kanlodthon khwampen kanmuang: kanprab khwam samphan rawang angkorn phathana achon rath lae prachachon [The Politics of Depoliticization: The Transformation of NGOs- State - People Relations]. Bangkok: Office of the Higher Education Commission Research Fund, Department of Social Sciences, Silpakorn University.

Attajak, S. 2005. Raboksapsin nai chon bot phark nua khong prathait thai [Property Regime in Rural Northern Thailand]. In *Prawathisart khwarmkhit thai kap naew khit chumchon [The History of Thai Thinking and Community]*, eds. N. Chatthip and B. Vanvipa. Bangkok.: Srangsan.

Ayuwat, D. 1993. Effects of migration patterns on forest use and forestry projects in a Thai village. *Society & Natural Resources* 6 (2):195-202.

Baker, C. 2000. Thailand’s Assembly of the Poor: background, drama, reaction. *South East Asia Research* 8 (1):5-29.

———. 2016. The 2014 Thai Coup and Some Roots of Authoritarianism. *Journal of contemporary Asia* 46 (3):388-404.

Bamrung, B. 1984. Wathanatham chumchon [Community Culture Approach]. In *Approaches in Thai Social Development: The poceedings fom the seminar on development experiences*, ed. TVS. Bangkok: Thai Volunteer Service Project.

Barry, A. 2012. Political situations: knowledge controversies in transnational governance. *Critical Policy Studies* 6 (3):324-226.

Bassett, T. J., D. Crummey, and M. M. v. Beusekom. 2004. African Savannas: global narratives and local knowledge of environmental change. *African studies review* 47 (3):209-211.

Bates, R. H., A. Greif, M. Levi, J.-L. Rosenthal, and B. R. Weingast. 1998. *Analytic narratives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Batt, S. 1994. *Patient no more: The politics of breast cancer*. Edinburgh: Scarlet.

Beck, S., and T. Forsyth. 2015. Co-production and Democratizing Global Environmental Expertise: the IPCC and adaptation to climate change. In *Science and democracy: Making knowledge and making power in the biosciences and beyond*, eds. R. Hagendijk, S. Hilgartner and C. Miller, 113-132. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bello, W. 2014. Class war: Thailand’s military coup. *Foreign Policy in Focus*.

Bencharat, S. C. 2014. Redefining citizenship rights: The community forest movement in Thailand and strategic rights claim, School of Social Sciences and Communications, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, LaTrobe University.

Béné, C. 2005. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Discourse, Policy Controversies and the Role of Science in the Politics of Shrimp Farming Development. *Development policy review* 23 (5):585-614.

Benjaminsen, T. A. 2009. Climate change and conflicts in the Sahel - politics versus science. *Internasjonal politikk* 67 (2):151-172.

Beymer-Farris, B. A., and T. J. Bassett. 2013. Environmental narratives and politics in Tanzania's Rufiji Delta: A reply to Burgess et al. *Global Environmental Change* 23 (5):1355-1358.

Bowie, K. A. 1992. Unraveling the myth of the subsistence economy: the case of textile production in nineteenth century northern Thailand. *Journal of Asian studies* 51 (4):797-823.

Bruijnzeel, L. A. 2004. Hydrological functions of tropical forests: Not seeing the soil for the trees? *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 104 (1):185-228.

Bryant, R. L., and S. a. Bailey. 1997. *Third World political ecology*. London ; New York: Routledge.

Calder, I. 1999. *The blue revolution: land use and integrated resource management*. London: Earthscan.

Chatthip, N. 1991a. The Community Culture School of Thought. In *Thai Constructions of Knowledge,* eds. M. Chitakasem and A. Turton, 118-141. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

———. 1991b. *Watthanatham thai kap khabuan kanplianpleang sangkhom [Thai culture and social-change movements]*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Chusak, W. 2008. History and geography of identifications related to resource conflicts and ethnic violence in Northern Thailand. *Social Europe* 49 (1):111-127.

Chusak, W., and I. G. Baird. 2018. Communal land titling dilemmas in northern Thailand: From community forestry to beneficial yet risky and uncertain options. *Land Use Policy* 71:320-328.

Cockburn, A., and J. Ridgeway. 1979. *Political ecology: An activist's reader on energy, land, food, technology, health, and the economics and politics of social change*. New York: Times Books.

Darlington, S. M. 2012. *The ordination of a tree : the Thai Buddhist environmental movement*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press.

Dwyer, P., and M. Minnegal. 2006. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Risk, Uncertainty and Decision-Making by Victorian Fishers. *Journal of Political Ecology* 13:1-23.

Epstein, S. 1996. *Impure science: AIDS activism and the politics of knowledge*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Fahn, J. 2003. *A land on fire: The environmental consequences of the Southeast Asian boom*. Boulder: Westview.

Feindt, P. H., and A. Oels. 2005. Does discourse matter? Discourse analysis in environmental policy making. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7 (3):161-173.

Ferrara, F. 2014. Unfinished business: the contagion of conflict over a century of Thai political development. In *"Good Coup Gone Bad": Thailand's political development since Thaksin's downfall*, ed. Pavin Chachavalpongpun, 17-46. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Forsyth, T. 2003. *Critical political ecology : the politics of environmental science*. London ; New York: Routledge.

———. 2007. Are Environmental Social Movements Socially Exclusive? An Historical Study from Thailand. *World Development* 35 (12):2110-2130.

Forsyth, T., and A. Walker. 2008. *Forest guardians, forest destroyers : The politics of environmental knowledge in northern Thailand*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Forsyth, T., and A. Walker. 2014. Hidden Alliances: Rethinking Environmentality and the Politics of Knowledge in Thailand's Campaign for Community Forestry. *Conservation and Society* 12 (4):408-417.

Friend, R. M. 2009. Fishing for influence: Fisheries science and evidence in water resources development in the Mekong basin. *Water Alternatives* 2 (2):167-182.

Glassman, J. 2004. *Thailand at the margins : internationalization of the State and the transformation of labour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2010. 'The Provinces Elect Governments, Bangkok Overthrows Them': Urbanity, Class and Post-democracy in Thailand. *Urban Studies* 47 (6):1301-1323.

Goldman, M., P. Nadasdy, and M. Turner. 2011. *Knowing Nature : Conversations at the Intersection of Political Ecology and Science Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goodman, N. 1978. *Ways of worldmaking*. Hassocks: Harvester Press.

Haberkorn, T. 2011. *Revolution interrupted : farmers, students, law, and violence in northern Thailand*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press ; London : Eurospan [distributor].

Hajer, M., M. van den Brink, and T. Metze. 2006. Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning. *Nederlandse Geografische Studies* 344:65-76.

Hajer, M., and W. Versteeg. 2005. A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: Achievements, challenges, perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7 (3):175-184.

Hajer, M. A. 1995. *The politics of environmental discourse : ecological modernization and the policy process*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

———. 2009. *Authoritative governance : policy-making in the age of mediatization*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Hewison, K. 1993. Nongovernmental organizations and the cultural development perspective in Thailand: A comment on Rigg (1991). *World Development* 21 (10):1699-1708.

Hirsch, P. 1993. *Political economy of environment in Thailand*. Manila: Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers.

———. 1996. *Seeing forests for trees : environment and environmentalism in Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1997.

Hirsch, P., and L. Lohmann. 1989. The contemporary politics of environment in Thailand. *Asian survey* XXIX (4):439-451.

Jasanoff, S. 2004a. Ordering knowledge, ordering society. In *States of knowledge: the coproduction of science and social order*, ed. S. Jasanoff, 13-45. London: Routledge.

———. 2004b. *States of knowledge : the co-production of science and social order*. London; New York: Routledge.

———. 2005. *Designs on nature : science and democracy in Europe and the United States*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

———. 2012. *Science and public reason*. New York: Routledge.

Ji, U. 2006. The impact of the Thai ‘sixties’ on the peoples movement today. *Inter-Asia cultural studies* 7 (4):570-588.

———. 2009. Class struggle between the colourful T-shirts in Thailand. *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 1 (1):76-100.

Jones, M. D., and C. M. Radaelli. 2015. The Narrative Policy Framework: child or monster? *Critical Policy Studies* 9 (3):339-355.

Jung, A., R.-L. Korinek, and H. Straßheim. 2014. Embedded expertise: a conceptual framework for reconstructing knowledge orders, their transformation and local specificities. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 27 (4):398–419.

Kanok, W. 1981. Communist Revolutionary Process: A study of the communist party of Thailand, PhD Thesis at the Department of Political Science, The Johns Hopkins University.

Kongpob, A. 2017. Investors in, poor out: junta's land policy after 3 years in power. *Prachatai* 29 May 2017.

Ku, A. S. M., and H. Tian. 2002. Narratives, politics, and the public sphere: struggles over political reform in the final transitional years in Hong Kong (1992-1994). *Discourse and society* 13 (3):412-414.

Lamb, V. 2018. Who knows the river? Gender, expertise, and the politics of local ecological knowledge production of the Salween River, Thai-Myanmar border. *Gender, Place & Culture* Published Online:1-16.

Latour, B. 2005. *Reassembling the social : an introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Law, J. 2011. Collateral realities. In *The politics of knowledge*, eds. F. Dominguez Rubio and P. Baert, 156–178. London: Routledge.

Law, J., and V. Singleton. 2005. Object Lessons. *Organization* 12 (3):331-355.

Leach, M., and R. Mearns eds. 1996. *The lie of the land: Challenging received wisdom on the African environment*. Oxford: James Currey.

Lejano, R., M. Ingram, and H. Ingram. 2013. *The Power of Narrative in Environmental Networks*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Lejano, R. P. 2015. Narrative disenchantment. *Critical Policy Studies* 9 (3):368-371.

Ley, B. L. 2009. *From pink to green: Disease prevention and the environmental breast cancer movement*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Lohmann, L. 1995. No rules of engagement: Interest groups, centralization and the creative politics of ‘environment’ in Thailand. In *Counting the costs: Economic growth and environmental change in Thailand*, ed. J. Rigg, 211-234. Sinagpore: ISEAS.

Magagnini, S. 1994. If a tree falls .... a monk’s blessing for Thailand’s forest. *The Amicus Journal* 16 (2):12-14.

McCargo, D. 2000. *Politics and the press in Thailand : media machinations*. London: Routledge.

McCargo, D., and P. Ukrit. 2005. *The Thaksinization of Thailand*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Miller, C. 2005. New Civic Epistemologies of Quantifcation: Making Sense of Indicators of Local and Global Sustainability. *Science, Technology & Human Values* 30:403–432.

———. 2008. Civic epistemologies: constituting knowledge and order in political communities. *Sociology Compass* 2 (6):1896–1919.

Miller, H. T. 2012. *Governing narratives: symbolic politics and policy change*: University of Alabama Press.

Missingham, B. 2003. *The Assembly of the Poor in Thailand: from local struggles to national protest movement*. Bangkok: Silkworm.

Müller, M., and C. Schurr. 2016. Assemblage thinking and actor-network theory: conjunctions, disjunctions, cross-fertilisations. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41 (3):217-229.

Pasuk, P., and C. Baker. 2010. *Thaksin (2nd edition)*. Bangkok: Silkworm.

Peet, R., and M. Watts. 2004. *Liberation ecologies : environment, development, social movements*. 2nd ed. London ; New York: Routledge.

Peluso, N. L., and P. Vandergeest. 2011. Political Ecologies of War and Forests: Counterinsurgencies and the Making of National Natures. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101 (3):587-608.

Pinkaew, L. 2005. On the Politics of Nature Conservation in Thailand. In *After the Logging Ban: Politics of Forest Management in Thailand*, ed. FER, 48-67. Bangkok: FER.

———. 2009. Botkhwarm prasit: Amnart niyom thongthin niyom lae seri niyom mai kap botphanna wa duay sithi chumchon [Review article: Popular and new liberalism and depicting community rights]. *Journal of the Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University* 21 (2):277-304.

———. 2017. Are Thai NGOs tools of the junta? *Pratichai* 2 August 2017.

Pinkaew, L., and N. Rajesh eds. 1992. *The future of people and forests in Thailand after the logging ban*. Bangkok: Project for Ecological Recovery.

Prapart, P. 1998. *Kan muang bon thong thanon: 99 wan samatcha khon chon [Politics on the street: 99 days of the Assembly of the Poor]*. Bangkok: Krirk University.

Prasopchoke, M. 2010. The Philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy: A Contribution to the Theory of Development. *Asia-Pacific development journal* 17 (1):123-143.

Pye, O. 2005a. Forest Policy and Strategic Groups in Thailand. *Internationales Asienforum* 36 (3-4):311-336.

———. 2005b. *Khor Jor Kor: forest politics in Thailand*. Bangkok: White Lotus.

Quinn, R. 1997. NGOs, Peasants and the State: Transformation and Intervention in Rural Thailand, 1970-1990, Department of Politics, Australian National University.

Rajesh, N. 1992. Monks battle to save forests. *Down To Earth* 15th September 1992.

RECOFTC. 2011. Community forestry in Thailand. Bangkok.

Reynolds, C. J. 2013. Chatthip Nartsupha, his critics, and more criticism. In *Essays on Thailand's Economy and Society for Professor Chatthip Nartsupha at 72*, eds. P. Phongpaichit and C. Baker, 1-22. Bangkok: Sangsan.

Rigg, J. 1991. Grass-roots development in rural Thailand: A lost cause? *World Development* 19 (2):199-211.

Rodríguez-Giralt, I., I. Marrero-Guillamón, and D. Milstein. 2018. Reassembling activism, activating assemblages: an introduction. *Social movement studies* 17 (3):257-268.

Roe, E. M. 1991. Development narratives, or making the best of blueprint development. *World Development* 19 (4):287-300.

Salam, M. A., T. Noguchi, and R. Pothitan. 2006. Community Forest Management in Thailand: Current Situation and Dynamics in the Context of Sustainable Development. *New Forests* 31 (2):273-291.

Saneh, C. 2006. *Kanmuang Thai kap phathanakan rat thum nun [Thai Politics and Constitutional Development]*. Bangkok: The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Saneh, C., and S. Yos eds. 1993. *Pa Chumchon Nai Prathet Thai: Naeo Thang Kan Phatana [Community Forest in Thailand: Development Guidelines]*. Bangkok: Rural Development Institute.

Sato, J. 2003. Public land for the people: Institutional basis of community forestry in Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32 (2):329-346.

Seri, P. ed. 1986. *Back to the Roots: Village and Self-Reliance in a Thai Context*. Bangkok: Rural Development Documentation Centre.

Smith, W., and W. H. Dressler. 2017. Rooted in Place? The Coproduction of Knowledge and Space in Agroforestry Assemblages. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 107 (4):897-914.

Spicer, M. W. 2013. Contesting narratives in politics: Governing narratives: symbolic politics and policy change. *Public administration review* 73 (5):768-771.

Thompson, M., M. Warburton, and T. Hatley. 1986. *Uncertainty on a Himalayan scale : an institutional theory of environmental perception and a strategic framework for the sustainable development of the Himalaya*: Milton Ash Editions.

Thongchai, W. 1994. *Siam mapped: a history of the geo-body of a nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

———. 2000. The quest for ‘Siwilai’: A geographical discourse of civilizational thinking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Siam. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59 (3):528-549.

———. 2008. Nationalism and the Radical Intelligentsia in Thailand. *Third World Quarterly* 29 (3):575-591.

Tickle, A., and I. Welsh eds. 1998. *Environment and Society in Eastern Europe*. Harlow: Longman.

Ting, Z., C. Haiyun, G. P. Shivakoti, R. Cochard, and K. Homcha-aim. 2011. Revisit to community forest in northeast of Thailand: changes in status and utilization. *Environment, development and sustainability* 13 (2):385-402.

Usher, A. D. 2009. *Thai forestry: a critical history*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm.

Vandergeest, P. 1991. Gifts and rights - cautionary notes on community self-help in Thailand. *Development and change* 22 (3):421-443.

Vandergeest, P. 1996. Mapping nature: Territorialization of forest rights in Thailand. *Society and Natural Resources* 9:159-175.

Vandergeest, P., and N. Peluso. 1995. Territorialization and State Power in Thailand. *Theory and society* 24 (3):385-426.

Vandergeest, P., and N. Peluso. 2006. Empires of forestry: Professional forestry and state power in Southeast Asia, Part 1. *Environment and History* 12 (1):31-64.

Walker, A. 2004. Seeing farmers for the trees: community forestry and the arborealisation of agriculture in northern Thailand. *Asia Pacific viewpoint* 45 (3):311-324.

———. 2014. Is peasant politics in Thailand civil? In *"Good Coup Gone Bad": Thailand's political development since Thaksin's downfall*, ed. Pavin Chachavalpongpun, 199-215. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Winickoff, D. 2012. Preface. In *Science and public reason*, ed. S. Jasanoff, ix-xii. London and New York: Routledge.

Wynne, B. 1996. SSK's identity parade: Signing-up, off-and-on. *Social studies of science* 26 (2):357-391.

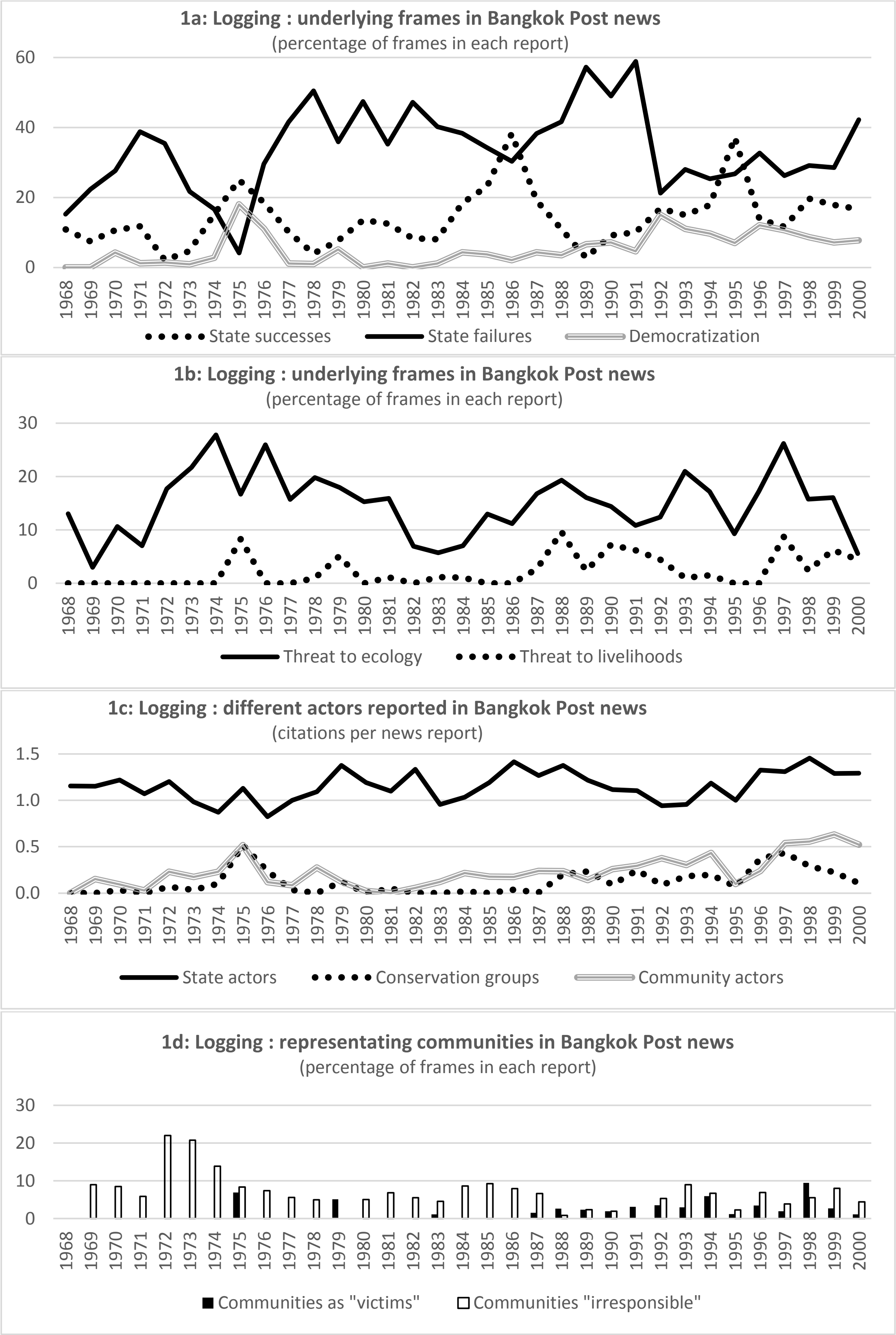
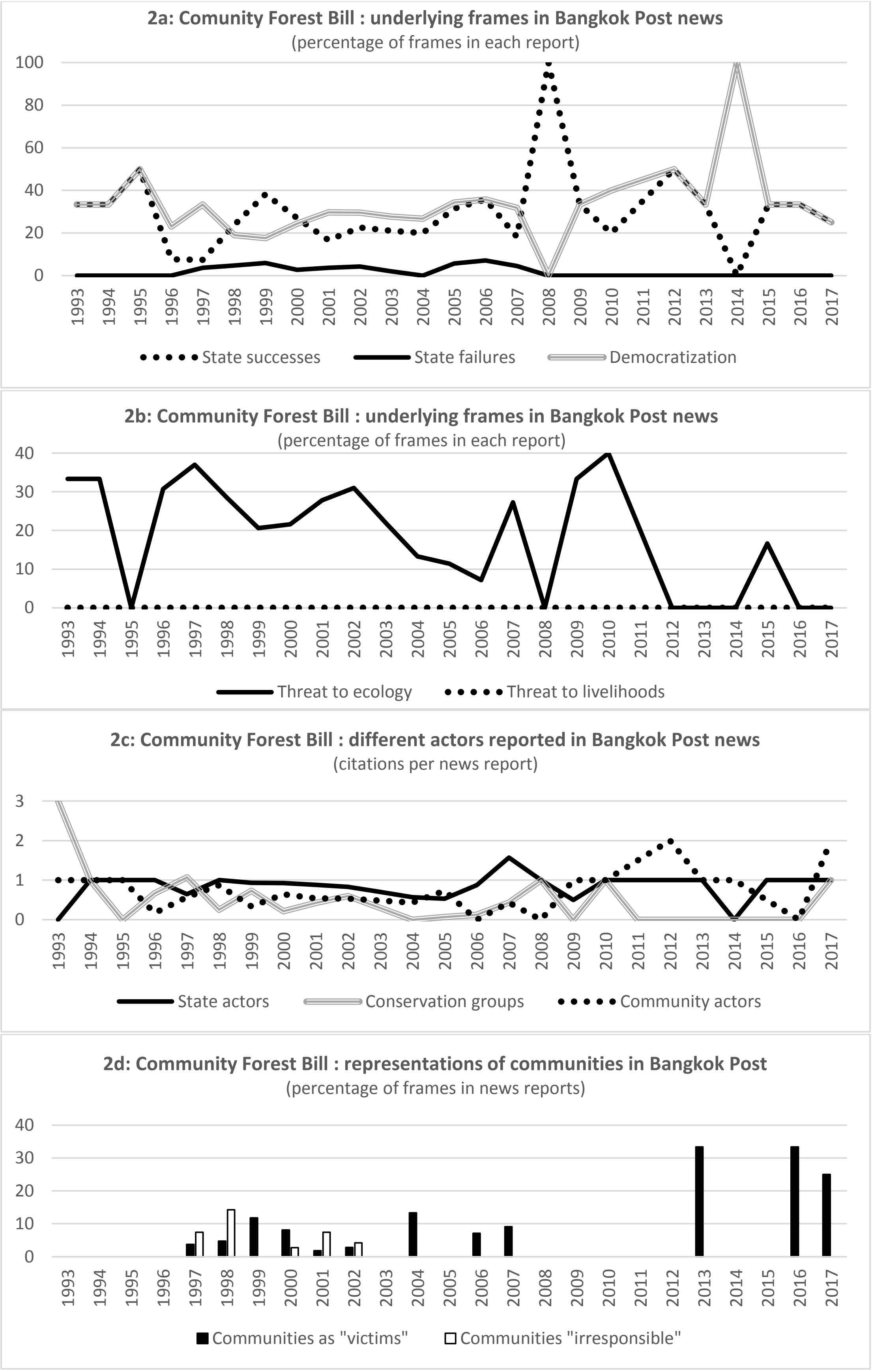


Figure 1: Content analysis of *Bangkok Post* news reports for logging, 1968-2000
(n=1,518 reports, source: *Bangkok Post* library archive)


2a: Comunity Forest Bill : underlying frames in Bangkok Post news
(percentage of frames in each report)

2b: Community Forest Bill : underlying frames in Bangkok Post news
(percentage of frames in each report)

2c: Community Forest Bill : different actors reported in Bangkok Post news
(citations per news report)

2d: Community Forest Bill : representations of communities in Bangkok Post
(percentage of frames in news reports)

100
80
60
40
20
0
1993
1994
1995
1996
1997
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009
2010
2011
2012
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
State successes
State failures
Democratization
40
30
20
10
0
Threat to ecology
Threat to livelihoods
3
2
1
0
State actors
Conservation groups
Community actors
40
30
20
10
0
Communities as "victims"
Communities "irresponsible"

Figure 2: Content analysis of *Bangkok Post* news reports for community forest bill, 1993-2017 (n=165 reports, source: Factiva database)

---

[1] Indeed, Spicer (2013, 771) notes “the ideographs and narratives that we use are not simply words. They constitute who we are, and they can have consequences for us, both good and bad.” It should be noted that this socially constructivist application of narratives is different to the more cognitive “analytical narratives” espoused by Bates et al (1998).

[2] This statement is commonly attributed to Philip Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post* 1946–63.

[3] Online searching was conducted through the Factiva database. https://www.dowjones.com/products/factiva/

[4] The researcher speaks and writes Thai, although works faster in English.

[5] In particular, some especially notable long-term specialists on environmentalism at the *Bangkok Post* include Sanitsuda Ekichai, Supara Janchitfah, and Wasant Techawongtham, all of whom have been interviewed in relation to this work.

[6] http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview

[7] https://thaipoliticalprisoners.wordpress.com/pendingcases/thanakorn-siripaiboon/

[8] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/09/world/asia/thai-man-jailed-for-insulting-king-dies-in-detention.html

[9] Jon Ungpakorn, interview Bangkok, March 2008

[10] Alleged encroachment especially took place in Chaiayphum, Phitsanulok, Si Saket, and Chantaburi provinces. *Bangkok Post* 15 September 1973: “Trespassers into national park swell to 10,000.” *Bangkok Post* 16 June 1975: “Villagers can settle in forest area.” *Bangkok Post* 11 June 1976: “Students ask government to save forests.”

[11] *Bangkok Post* 10 June 1975: “NSCT denies urging farmers to violence.”

[12] Government reforestation during 1986-87 became known as “Green Isaan” partly because of the colour of army uniforms. Isaan is the Thai name for the northeast. Similar reforestation and resettlement in Isaan was attempted during the Khor Jor Kor program of the early 1990s (Pye 2005b).

[13] Two important early conservation groups were the Association for Conservation of Wildlife, and the Society for the Conservation of Treasure and the Environment.

[14] Other environmental topics such as dams, pollution, agriculture, tourism development, etc., are not included in these figures.

[15] Personal observation, May 1999

[16] Interview with the researcher, in Thai, 1999

[17] Interview with the researcher, in Thai, 2008, emphasis in original

---

[18] *Bangkok Post* 29 April 1998: “Editorial—A prime example of what must stop.”

[19] A further example is resistance to government plans to relocate Karen villagers from the Kaeng Krachan forest in western Thailand, which has repeated the usual representation of the Karen: see *Bangkok Post* 16 June 2018: “Respect rights of the Karen.”

[20] In particular, Fahn points to the corrupting influence of General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, who was prime minister 1996-97 as an example of a politician who supported business interests that threatened forest conservation.

[21] Interview with Rathaya Janthien, 1999. This statement was based on the record of an aviator who flew from Bangkok northeast to the Mekong river and claimed to have seen no gaps in forest.

[22] Interview with Baramee Chiyarat, Assembly of the Poor, 2017

[23] Pasuk Pongpaichit (2004) in *Bangkok Post* 21 April 2004: “Address delivered at April 2 seminar ‘Statesman or manager? Image and reality of leadership in Southeast Asia.”

[24] Sanitsuda Ekichai (2006) in *Bangkok Post* 20 July 2006: “Commentary - Caretaker making sure he does not sink alone.”

[25] Interview with Chayan Vaddhanaputhi, 2008

[26] http://www.livingriversiam.org/index-eng.html

[27] Personal observation, September 2012

[28] Interview with Baramee Chiyarat, Assembly of the Poor, 2017

TIM FORSYTH is a Professor in the Department of International Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science, London WC2A 2AE, UK. E-mail: t.j.forsyth@lse.ac.uk. His research interests include environment and development, especially relating to the governance of contested knowledge claims and expertise, especially in Asia.

Figure 1: Content analysis of Bangkok Post news reports for logging, 1968-2000 (n=1,518 reports, source: *Bangkok Post* library archive)

Figure 2: Content analysis of Bangkok Post news reports for community forest bill, 1993-2017 (n=165 reports, source: Factiva database)