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DISCOURSE DIALOGUE:
GRASSROOTS' PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Discourse Dialogue: Grassroots' Perspective on Sustainable Development

by P. Intoo-Marn

The concept of sustainable development has been discussed, debated and defined
at the global level since the 1960's. This dialogue has created questions on
whether or not the definitions promoted at the global level are appropriate in the
context of rural development in developing countries, and, furthermore, how
grassroots people in the developing world define the concept of sustainable
development.

This dissertation considers the "dialogue" on sustainable development from a
number of key sources at the global level and compares this with the perspective
of grassroots farmers of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand towards
sustainable development. Discourse analysis approach is used as the method for
the analysis of sustainable development discourses at the global level, and
qualitative research through participant observation was conducted in order to
gather information from Mae Tha farmers.

Global sustainable development discourse is different from that of Mae Tha
farmers. The global discourse comprises two sub-discourses; the Earth and Equity.
It argues that sustainability on Earth will be attained when equity between human
beings and the environment, and between developed and developing countries,
take place. Economic development is seen as a means to accomplishing these two
concepts of equity.

Grassroots farmers of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand define
sustainability as "having rice to eat and having land on which to stay". However,
as the farmers have experienced developmental problems introduced to the
community by outsiders, namely government development policies, they view that

in order to attain sustainability, the villagers themselves have to have control over development direction. This control consists of control over agricultural production and food supply, land and forest management, and knowledge used in development processes. To have control, power to negotiate with the state development direction is required. They view that this power will be gained through strengthened people's organisations and networks. Although the villagers view power to control as a means to attaining sustainability, they, however, view that this power needs to be controlled by the concept of "knowing when to stop, knowing what sufficiency means".

The perspective on sustainability and sustainable development of Mae Tha farmers results from decades of experience. Situated in different contexts, global and grassroots' sustainable development discourses are therefore different. This difference will not cause any problems in terms of rural development if the Thai government, an institution standing between grassroots and global development directions, can serve the needs of grassroots people. However, the Thai state cannot ignore the flow of the global economy, and has adopted global ideology to be the country's development direction, which is not appropriate for rural development in the Thai context. To be sustainable in the rural development context, therefore, local communities must be politically autonomous. To be autonomous, a "genuine" decentralisation of power is needed.

In sum, decentralisation, as well as strengthened people's organisations, are the very keys to arriving at sustainability at rural level.

Keywords: Discourse, Sustainable development, Sustainability, Grassroots, Global, National development policy, Control, Decentralisation, People's organisations and networks, Organic farming, Land and forest management

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DOLA	Department of Local Administration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
SAO	Subdistrict Administrative Organisation
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCSD	World Commission on Sustainable Development
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

On the closing of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002, Mr. Kofi A. Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), stated "We have to go out and take action. This is not the end. It's just the beginning". Given that the concept of sustainable development and its related issues have been discussed, defined, and redefined through several decades, this statement raises question as to whether sustainable development, as defined at the global level, has brought about positive and sustainable progress. Why was the Johannesburg Summit merely "the beginning"?

In Mae Tha, a small rural community in northern Thailand, there is a farmers' organisation called "Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives". The name of the cooperatives, somehow, indicates that there must be such a thing as sustainability and/or sustainable development existing in this community. Thus, the question here is whether the global concept of sustainable development is the same as or different from that of Mae Tha farmers? If they are different, why are they, and how does the difference impact on rural development in developing countries? This dissertation explores the issues around these questions.

1.2 Objectives

To answer the questions stated above, the following research objectives have been defined and undertaken.

1. To examine how the concept of sustainable development has been defined and developed at the global level.
2. To draw conclusions on how the grassroots people of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand view and define the concept of sustainable development.
3. To compare the global dialogue on sustainable development with the grassroots' perspective.
4. To examine how the Thai government positions itself between global and grassroots development directions.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 is about research methodology. Discourse analysis approach is used as a frame for analysis of the formation and development of a global definition of sustainable development, and participant observation is the method used for field information gathering.

Chapter 3 uses discourse analysis to review and analyse the world concerns about environmental problems resulting from development policies. This chapter reviews the emergence and development of sustainable development discourse from Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" published in 1962, to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

Chapter 4 illustrates how rural farmers in developing countries respond to the country's development strategies, and how they view and define "sustainable development", and "sustainability". The selected farmers are members of people's organisations, namely Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives and Community Forest Committee, of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand. Physical characteristics and history of the community, and the emergence and development of the organisations are described in order to illustrate the context in which the sustainable development concept emerged.

Chapter 5 is an analysis of the development of Thailand National Economic and Social Development Plan dating from 1961 to the present. The analysis focuses on the conceptual context of the plans. Local Administration systems through which the plans have been translated into actions in the context of rural community development, is also analysed. It aims to examine how the Thai government positions itself between global and grassroots development directions.

Chapter 6 discusses the definition of sustainable development from the perspective of Mae Tha farmers, and compares this definition with global and national Thai definitions. The chapter aims to identify the ideological basis on which these definitions have been constructed, and to determine whether or not global and national definitions are appropriate for rural development at grassroots level.

Chapter 7 is a research summary, recommendations and conclusions.

Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the approach and methods used in this dissertation. The approach taken is discourse analysis, aiming to uncover belief systems and ideology on which global and grassroots' concepts of sustainable development have been constructed. The method used for information gathering at the global level is critical literature review and at the grassroots level, participant observation.

2.2 Discourse

Macnaghten (1993: 53) states that "all forms of social reality have a peculiarly human and social constructed nature". These forms of reality are called "discourse". Foucault (cited in Smart 1985: 40) argues that "discourse refers to a group of statements, that is to say statements identified as belonging to a single discursive formation". The term "discourse" is therefore seen as a social practice having its own particular amalgamations of ideologies relevant to a particular social domain (Barnes and Duncan cited in Baxter 2001).

Discourse is presented through language; language is a transmitter of discourse in other words. While the traditional perception about language is that language acts as a neutraliser, discourse theorists perceive that "language organised into discourse has an immense power to shape the way people... experience and behave in the world" (Burman and Parker 1993: 1). For example, Macnaghten (1993) illustrates that "nature" can be "named" in many ways, from nature as wilderness to nature as ecological balance. He argues that different names represent different discourses, and "one discourse implies particular sets of social relationship" (ibid: 70) within particular "discourse community"[1]. Those who defined nature as wilderness, therefore, understand and interact with nature differently from those who defined it as ecological balance. They have different perceptions because they are situated in different discourse communities. Discourse therefore refers to different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and

social practice (Fairclough 1992). It is a socially constructed reality which contributes to the construction of knowledge and belief systems (Washington 2002). Thus, each particular knowledge and belief system is regarded as a discourse produced by a particular discourse community.

2.3 Discourse Analysis

In a common-sense understanding, discourse is "seen as synonymous with discussion, or is at best understood as a 'mode of talking'" (Hajer 1995: 44). Discourse analysis is therefore a process by which "the social backgrounds and the social effects of specific modes of talking" (ibid: 44) is analysed. It aims to "unravel the process through which discourse is constructed, and the consequences of these construction" (Macnaghten 1993: 54).

The analytic process starts by "coding" signs and symbols of the discourse. The goal of coding is "to squeeze a body of discourse into manageable chunks" (Potter and Wetherell in Washington 2002: 73). As the discourses analysed in this research are global and grassroots' definitions of sustainable development, the first step of the analysis is to "deconstruct" the definitions; that is, to identify and code the notion of "unsustainability" and its causes implied in the discourses. It aims to determine the basis on which these two sustainable development discourses are constructed.

The second step is to identify the social relationships implied in the discourses; that is, to identify the relationships between the subject matters or metaphors resulting from the deconstructing and coding process, and the discourse producers. These relationships lead to an analysis of what the consequences of the discourses are, and how they have impacted on global and local development directions.

2.4 Research Strategy

Neuman (1997) indicates that there are three main purposes of social science research. These are: to explore a new topic - exploratory research; to describe a

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[1] Discourse community is defined as "a group of people who participate within a similar discourse" (Washington 2002).

social phenomena - descriptive research; and to explain why something occurs - explanatory research. This research attempts to find grassroots' definition of sustainable development, and how and why they define it the way they do. It is at the same time exploring a new way of defining sustainable development which is possibly different from the one defined by development professionals. This research therefore employs the three purposes of social science research. It is exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

To determine what strategy will fit a certain research, Yin (1984) argues that there are three conditions involved. These are: "(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events" (ibid: 16). The relationships of these conditions to five major research strategies are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies

Strategy	Form of research Question	Requires Control Over Behaviour Events?	Focuses on Contemporary Events?
Experiment	how, why	yes	yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes
Archival analysis (e.g. economic study)	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes/no
History	how, why	no	no
Case study	how, why	no	yes

Source: Yin 1984: 17

This research focuses on "how" and "why" questions, and has an emphasis on a contemporary phenomenon within real life context. Moreover, the researcher has no control over events, but seeks to explore, describe, and explain. A case study strategy has therefore been chosen.

2.5 Information Gathering Methods

Using discourse analysis as the research approach, this dissertation is committed to qualitative methods. This is because "qualitative methodology assumes that: reality is socially constructed; subject matter has primacy; and variables are interwoven, complex and difficult to measure. It aims for interpretation, contextualisation, and understanding the subject's perspective" (Washington 2002: 60).

> As being a case study, this dissertation requires multiple sources of evidence. This is because "the use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and observational issues. However, the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation"[2].
>
> (Yin 1984: 91)

Among the variety of methodologies, research is however designed on the basis of research questions. At the data collection stage, the question posed is whether or not the definition by Mae Tha grassroots farmers of sustainable development is different from that of global development professionals. If they are different, how and why they are different. The answer to these questions will lead to an analysis for answering another question: is the definition at the global level appropriate for rural development at grassroots level?

Information needed at this stage is divided into two parts; these are, the global, and the grassroots' definitions of sustainable development. The first part was done by a critical literature review of the documents of the major global events of sustainable development. The second was done by "Participant Observation" method.

2.5.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a strategy for field information gathering. McCall and Simmons (1969: 1) argue that:

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[2] Triangulation, sometimes called multiple operationalism, is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. It aims to overcome the weakness or biases of single method (see Denzin 1989).

It refers to a characteristic blend or combination of methods and techniques that is employed in studying certain types of subject matter: primitive societies, deviant subcultures, complex organisations (such as hospitals, unions, and corporations), social movements, communities, and informal group (such as gangs and factory worker groups). This characteristic blend of techniques… involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artefacts, and open-endedness in the directions the study takes.

The participant observation method fits very well with the second part of this research because the subject matter was defined as a community organisation, as well as a social movement. It could also be a subculture in that the way the people of the selected community organisation think was different from those of the mainstreams in Thai society. The information for this part of the research was gathered from two grassroots people's organisations of Mae Tha community, which were Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives and Mae Tha Community Forest Committee.

Participant observation employs a hermeneutic quality; that is, researchers are "in the setting". Data collected is qualitative. Furthermore, as intentionally unstructured in its research design, participant observation gives researchers a chance to maximise discovery and description rather than systematic theory testing (ibid), which subsequently leads to more comprehensive and accurate information (McCall and Simmons 1969; Friedrichs and Ludtke 1975 cited in Walker 1996).

In doing field research, I went to the village to gather information with the participant observation concept in my mind. In fact, the people I talked to and stayed with in the village were those whom I have known before, but never worked with. Before going to the village, I knew what they had been thinking and doing. I had a "foreknowledge" about the issue in my mind. I therefore went there to "observe" and "participate" in their daily lives and their work. I was at their meeting observing their discussion, on their farms helping them inspect organic farming practice, in their community forest planting trees, discussing social issues

while eating and drinking with them, and being their interpreter when foreign scholars and students came to learn about "development" in the village. In doing so, I reexamined whether my foreknowledge was accurate, and figured out the answers to my research questions from the foreknowledge and the new information gained.

Methods used for information gathering at both global and grassroots levels are seen in Table 2.2.

2.6 Summary

Discourse analysis approach is used to investigate how sustainable development discourses have been constructed at global and grassroots levels, and whether or not theses two discourses are different. Methods used for information gathering are critical literature review and participant observation. Findings from these methods are presented in the following two chapters. Visual graphic is partly used in the presentation of the findings. The analysis of how and why these two discourses are different will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 2.2: Information Gathering Methods

Objectives	Questions	Sources of Information	Methods
To examine how the concepts of sustainable development have been defined at the global level	- What are the global definitions of sustainable development, and how it has been developed?	- World Conferences and summits on sustainable development documents, and related literature	- Critical literature review - Discourse analysis
To draw conclusions on how grassroots people of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand view and define the concept of sustainable development	- What has been happening in the community in the last fifty years?	- Cooperatives and community forest committees, and individual farmers - NGO workers	- Semi-structured interview - Informal discussion - Semi-structured interview - Secondary data (e.g. project documents, reports)
	- Who and what organisations have involved in community development and the development of community organisations?	- Cooperatives and community forest committees	- Organisational charts - Semi-structured interview - Informal discussion - Direct observations
	- How have the cooperatives and the community forest committee been formulated?	- Cooperatives and community forest committees, and individual farmers	- Semi-structured interview - Group discussion - Organisational charts - Secondary data (e.g. reports, minutes)
	- What are the activities of the cooperatives and community forest committee?	- Cooperatives and community forest committees	- Semi-structured interview - Secondary data (e.g. planning documents, reports, minutes) - Direct observations

			- Individual farmers	- Informal discussion
	- What are the indicators of "development"?		- Cooperative and community forest committees	- Organisational charts
				- Group discussion
	- How to reach the indicators?		- Cooperatives and community forest committees	- Semi-structured interview
				- Group discussion
				- Planning documents
				- Organisational charts
To examine how the concept of sustainable development has been defined by the Thai government at the national level	- How have national Thai development plans been developed? - How has the concept of sustainable development been addressed in the national Thai development plans?		- National Economic and Social Development Plans - Thailand and its development literature	- Critical literature review and analysis
To compare the global and national dialogue on sustainable development with the grassroots' perspective	- What are the similarities and the differences between the global and the Thai national concepts of sustainable development? - Is the grassroots' perspective on sustainable development different from that of the global and the Thai national, what the differences are, and why they are different?		- From the above	- Discourse analysis

Chapter 3: Sustainable Development: A Global Discourse

3.1 Introduction

A discussion on sustainable development dates back at least thirty years. It was first addressed at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. At this conference, the international community met for the first time to consider global environment and development needs (Gardiner 2002), and this conference led to the formation of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). However, the term "sustainable development" became well known in 1987 when it was used in the Brundtland Report "Our Common Future" of the World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED). The essence of this report was to put environmental and social considerations into economic development. The emergence of this concept has made development professionals across the globe, particularly those involved in development practises and policymaking, rethink the direction of development. Five years after the publication of Brundtland Report, the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in which "the world's leaders met to plan the prevention of our Earth's environmental death" (Sitarz 1993: ix) was held. The outcome of this Summit was Agenda 21 – the global programme of action promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development (ibid). After that, in 1997, the UN General Assembly organised a special session on the Environment and Development in New York, the Rio +5, aiming to improve the application of Agenda 21. Then in the year 2002 the Johannesburg Summit, the Rio +10, was held. Between the UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm and the Johannesburg Summit, a series of conferences regarding sustainable development have been conducted across the globe (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Sustainable Development Chronology of Events (1972-2002)

Year	Events
1972	- UN Conference on Human Environment (Stockholm) - Limits to Growth (Club of Rome) - UN Environmental Programme (UNEP)
1975	- Intergovernmental Conference on Protection of Mediterranean (Barcelona)
1980	- World Conservation Strategy
1982	- UN World Charter for Nature
1987	- Brundtland report Our Common Future published
1992	- The European Community approved the Fifth Plan of Action: "Toward Sustainable Development"
1992	- UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro) - Agenda 21 Programme of Action
1993	- UN Commission on Sustainable Development appointed
1994	- European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns (Aalborg)
1997	- UN General Assembly: special session on the environment and development Rio +5 (New York)
1997	- Climate Change Accord: Conference of the Parties (Kyoto)
2002	- World Summit on Sustainable Development Rio +10 (Johannesburg)

Source: adapted from MOE 1997; USCNSD 2001.

The dissertation has chosen four major world conferences and summits regarded as the milestones of sustainable development dialogue at the global level for the analysis and discussion. These are the "UN Conference on Human Environment" in 1972, the "Brundtland Report" of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published in 1987, the "Earth Summit" in 1992, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development" in 2002.

Apart from a series of world conferences and summits, the event regarded as the starting point of the global dialogue on the interactions of humans, development,

and the environment, is the publication of Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" in 1962. The analysis of the global sustainable development discourse in this chapter therefore begins with this book. The overall purpose of this chapter is to determine on what basis and ideology the global discourse has been constructed.

3.2 Genesis: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring

It is claimed that by provoking people to think about and be aware of negative impacts of the use of chemical pesticides on human beings and the environment, Rachel Carson, an American biologist, and her book "Silent Spring" published in 1962 gave birth to populist ecological consciousness and the modern environmental movement (Graham Jr. 1970; Sale 1993; Tudge 1996; Stauber and Rampton 1996; Walker 1999; Watson 2002). In America, the book also led to the banning of DDT and the formation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Watson 2002).

"Silent spring" is a metaphor Carson used in order to describe an environmental problem. Spring is the part of the year when leaves and flowers appear, and birds sing. Figuratively, spring is a symbol of birth and growing. Silent spring therefore is a spring with problems. In the book, Carson divided time into three phases: the before; the silent spring; and the future. In the opening chapter A Fable for Tomorrow, the before was illustrated as:

> There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of colour that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the autumn morning.
> Along the roads, laurel, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveller's eye through much of the year. Even in winter the roadsides were places of beauty, where countless birds came to feed on the berries and on the seed heads of the dried weeds rising above the snow.
>
> (Carson 1962: 3)

The silent spring as:

> Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change… There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example-

where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the morning that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other birds voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.

On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks hatched. The farmers complained that they were unable to raise any pigs-the litters were small and the young survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming into bloom but no bees droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no fruit…

No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.

(ibid: 4)

Although this fable was an "imagined tragedy", Carson used it as an allegory representing the reality, as she stated at the end of the chapter that:

> This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them.
>
> (ibid: 4)

The silent spring and the before were opposite to one another. While the period before the silent spring was pleasurable because "all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings", the silent spring was not. This was because "the people had done it". Thus what silenced the voices of spring was the inharmonic relationship between human beings and their environment.

Carson stated in her second chapter that "the most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials… In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognised partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world-the very nature of its life" (ibid: 5). Then, in the rest of the book, she illustrated the impacts of chemical pesticides, DDT in particular, on the environment and human beings, as Marco (1987: xvii-xviii) summarises that:

Carson stated that chemical treatment of soils led to the destruction of beneficial biological species, and that such destruction resulted in imbalance to the ecosystem. Also, wildlife that ate chemically killed worms also died. She noted the long-term persistence of chlorinated hydrocarbons in soil and the possible transfer of chemicals into plants grown in such soils…

In human safety, Carson pointed out that exposure to or ingestion of various products, each at individually safe levels, taken together, could lead to health problems… She cited tumours and leukaemia brought on by carbonates, DDT, and aminotriazole as problems.

However, Carson believed that chemicals themselves were not causing the problems; rather, all the problems resulted from science and economic development.

This is an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. It is also an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged.

(ibid: 11)

Chemical pesticide was merely a child of science, and it was used in order to solve insect problems resulting from intensive crash crop monocultural farming.

Under primitive agriculture conditions the farmer had few insect problems. These (insect problems) arose with the intensification of agriculture-the devotion of immense acreages to a single crop. Such a system set the stage for explosive increases in specific insect populations. Single-crop farming does not take advantage of the principles by which nature works.

(ibid: 9)

Carson's problem analysis can be summarised as Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Rachel Carson's Problem Analysis

```
                                          ┌─────────────────────────┐
                                          │ Inharmonic relationship │
                                          │ between human and the   │
                                          │ environment             │
                                          │ (environmental and health│
                                          │ problems)               │
                                          └─────────────────────────┘
                                                      ↑
                                          ┌─────────────────────────┐
                              ┌──────────→│ chemical pesticides     │
                              │           └─────────────────────────┘
                              │                       ↑
              ┌───────────────────┐                   │
              │  insect problems  │                   │
              └───────────────────┘                   │
                       ↑                              │
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐             │
        │ intensive single-crop farming │             │
        └──────────────────────────────┘             │
                       ↑                              │
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐             │
        │ industrialisation of agriculture│           │
        └──────────────────────────────┘             │
                       ↑                              │
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
        │    economic development      │   │     science      │
        └──────────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
```
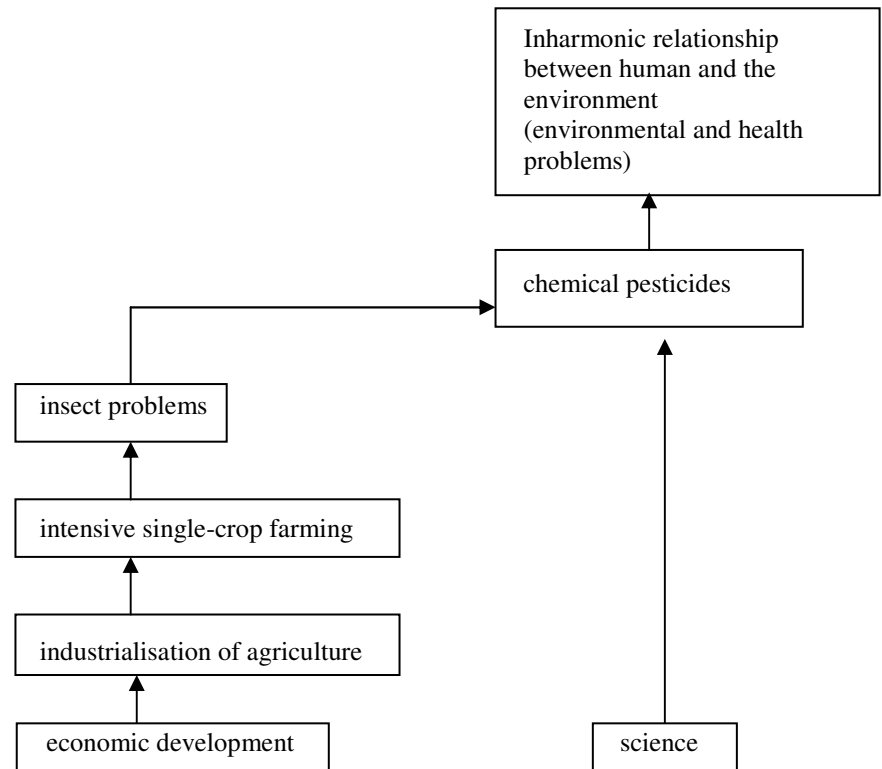
Furthermore, Carson argued that the problems, in fact, resulted from human's attempt to control nature. She stated in the last paragraph of the book that:

> The 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man. The concepts and practices of applied entomology for the most part date from the Stone age of Science. It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons, and that in turning them against the insects it has also turned them against the earth.
>
> (ibid: 243)

To be away from the silent spring, or to look forward to the future, she therefore suggested alternatives to the chemical control of insects, for instance, the "male sterilisation technique". She stated that "if it were possible to sterilise and release large number of insects,… the sterilised males would, under certain conditions, compete with the normal wild males so successfully that, after repeated releases, only infertile eggs would be produced and the population would be die out" (ibid: 227). She called it a biotic control which was "based on understanding of the

living organisms they seek to control, and of the whole fabric of life to which these organisms belong" (ibid: 226).

It can be said that Carson did not reject science. As a scientist-biologist, she viewed science as the central issue of both problems and solutions. According to her problem analysis, the industrialisation of agriculture in a form of intensive monoculture was the cause of insect problems. She, however, left this issue unsolved. She dealt only with the science issue, and her proposal was also to use science to "control" insects. The only difference between Carson's proposal and the chemical paradigm was that science, in her point of view, must be used in a proper manner; that is, science and scientific methods must be ecologically sound.

Carson did not address or define "sustainability" and "sustainable development". It might be because these terms were not yet introduced, or still unknown. What she raised was a concern about the environment and the harmonic relationship between the environment and human beings. However, whether or not she intended it to be, her book "Silent Spring" as well as herself have contributed to the formation and development of these ambiguous terms.

3.3 Stockholm 1972: The First Attempt
3.3.1 The Analysis
The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was conducted in Stockholm in 1972. It was the first time for the international community to meet and discuss the interactions of environment and development (Ward and Dubos 1972; Gardiner 2002). The efforts to link environment and development that began at this conference have continued through a series of global discussions (Linner and Selin 2002).

Prior to the conference Maurice F. Strong, the Secretary-General of the conference, commissioned Barbara Ward, a professor of international economic development at Columbia University, and René Dubos, a microbiologist whose book "So Human and Animal" won a Pulitzer Prize in 1969, to prepare a report called "Only One Earth. The Care and Maintenance of A Small Planet". The aim of the report was "to reach out for the best advice available from the world's

intellectual leaders in providing a conceptual framework for participants in the United Nations Conference and the public as well" (Strong, stated in Ward and Dubos: 1972: vii). The authors drafted a manuscript and then sent it to one hundred and fifty-two consultants who were scientific and intellectual leaders from fifty-eight countries to read and criticise (ibid). The final revised version of the report was based mainly on the critiques and contributions of these consultants.[3]

In the introduction, the authors metaphorised the earth as "a little spaceship on which we travel together… (However), we are indeed travellers bound to the earth's crust…" (ibid: xviii). This is because the two worlds that humans inhabit; "one is the natural world of plants and animals, of soils and airs and waters…, the other is the world of social institutions and artefacts" (ibid: 1), were out of balance and in conflict. The objectives of the UN Conference on the Human and Environment were, therefore, "to formulate the problems inherent in the limitations of the spaceship earth and to devise patterns of collective behaviour compatible with the continued flowering of civilisations" (ibid: xviii).

The authors argued that the three main factors that cause problems on earth were "the search for usable knowledge, the need for production and exchange, (and) the organising power of the social community" (ibid: 13). The interactions of these three factors resulted in the misuse of science for "unchecked power and greed" (ibid: 16). Since the sixteenth century, in the modern western context, knowledge had been produced for the benefit of human beings. It was called 'usable knowledge'. This perception of knowledge resulted from the idea proposed by Francis Bacon, saying that knowledge existed for the benefit and use of man (ibid). The notion of knowledge, thus, had changed from knowing in terms of understanding the world to knowing in terms of making use. Scientific experiments then took place in order to create new usable knowledge for the well-being of humans. This process of knowledge seeking then resulted in the rise of scientific "specialists".

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[3] The corresponding consultants were from every continents. Their names and institutions are in the book of the same name as the report (Ward and Dubos 1972: xvii-xxv).

Specialisation was somewhat opposite to holism. Specialists therefore could not understand the whole but only part. Hence, the problem of specialisation was that those scientific specialists failed to recognise the interrelation of things, while in the real world and in nature everything was interconnected.

The quest for usable knowledge also resulted in the rise of the Industrial Revolution. In this era, nature was seen as "free goods". Environmental nature was then extracted to be used as a means of industrial production, and of human well-being and prosperity. Furthermore, industrialism had contaminated the environment, resulting in environmental degradation and human health problems.

The "benefit and use of man" with science as a means of ideology also led to the rise of the market economy. Specialisation and industrialism led to a production of commodities, which could be translated into well-being and prosperity via trading and merchandising. As natural resources were seen to be a means of production, another problem resulting from the "using" of knowledge was resource scarcity. However, in the market economy era, "the market has only one answer to scarcity - to put up the price" (ibid: 25). This answer had then led to another problem.

With political sovereignty, some nation states took advantage for others in the form of economic colonisation. Political sovereignty through the world market economy had divided the world into two parts; the rich and the poor. Furthermore, "the expansion of nation power brought science and state together in the pursuit of war. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the oceans of the world were full of brawling, struggling Europeans rivals, chasing and fighting each other for the control of goods, monopolies, and trading posts" (ibid: 27).

Ward and Dubos (1972)'s problem analysis can be seen as Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Problem Analysis (prior to Stockholm Conference)
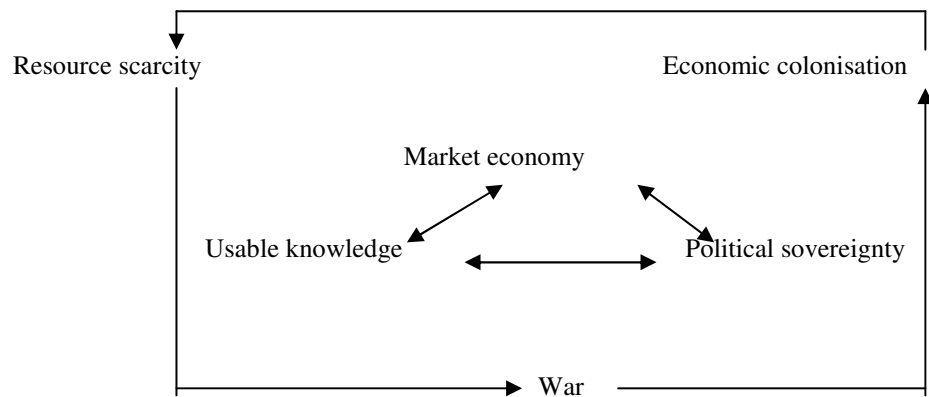
In sum, the authors suggested that the rise and the interactions of usable specialist science, the market economy, and political sovereignty had broken the world into parts. To solve this problem the collectiveness ideology was vital.

> The first step… is for the nations to accept a collective responsibility for discovering more - much more - about the natural system and how it is affected by man's activities and vice versa. This implies cooperative monitoring, research, and study on an unprecedented scale. It implies and intensive world-wide network for the systematic exchange of knowledge and experience.
>
> (ibid: 213)

To reach a solution, the authors suggested, the intergovernment institutions were needed. These institutions would be the platform for all nations to have collective decision-making regarding environmental, economic, and political issues. To be effective, however, the planet Earth must be perceived as "a centre of rational loyalty for all mankind" (ibid: 220).

It was claimed that the aim of the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment was to address "common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment" (UNEP 1972a: 1). This was, as stated in the conference declaration, because "the protection and improvement of human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world" (Proclaim 2). However, the preservation of the environment was constrained by "natural growth of population" (Proclaim 5). The interrelation of the well-being, economic

development, the environment and population growth analysed at the conference can be seen as Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: The Analysis (at the conference)

```
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │  well-being  │
                    └──────────────┘
                           ↑
              ┌───────────────────────┐
              │  economic development │
              └───────────────────────┘
                           ↑
          ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
          │ preservation of the environment │
          └─────────────────────────────────┘
                           ↑
              ┌───────────────────────┐
              │   (low) population    │
              └───────────────────────┘
```
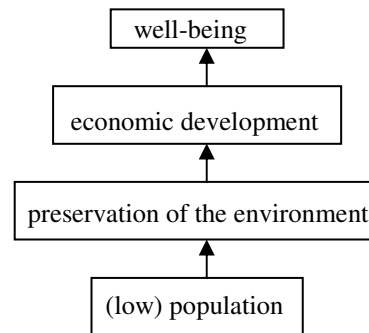
The major solutions, then, were firstly that "nature conservation, including wildlife, must therefore receive importance in planning for economic development" (Principle 4), and secondly, as the Principle 16 stated: "Demographic policies... should be applied in those regions where the rate of population growth or excessive population concentrations are likely to have adverse effects on the environment of the human environment and impede development". By these solutions, science and technology, and international agreements were seen as the means.

> Science and technology, as part of their contribution to economic and social development, must be applied to the identification, avoidance and control of environment risks and the solution of environmental problems and for the common good of mankind (Principle 18).
> International matters concerning the protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a cooperative spirit by all countries, big and small, on an equal footing. Cooperation through multilateral or bilateral arrangements or other appropriate means is essential to effectively control, prevent, reduce and eliminate adverse environmental effects... (Principle 24).
> States shall ensure that international organisations play a coordinated, efficient and dynamic role for the protection and improvement of the environment (Principle 25).

3.3.2 Implications for Developing Countries

The declaration of the conference stated that "in the developing countries most of the environmental problems are caused by underdevelopment. Millions continue to live far below the minimum levels required for a decent human existence, deprived of adequate food and clothing, shelter and education, health and sanitation" (Proclaim 4). In the context of developing countries poverty was thus the cause of environmental problems, which would result in 'not' well-being. The problems, therefore, "can best be remedied by accelerated development through the transfer of substantial quantities of financial assistance as a supplement to the domestic effort of the developing countries..." (Principle 9).

In sum the overreaching goal of the UN Conference on Human Environment was to set up an agenda for solving environmental constraints to economic development and human well-being. Science and technology, and international agreements were seen as the effective means to attaining the goal. As the report prior to the conference stated that unsustainability was partly resulted from the misuse of science, the declaration was then supposed clarify how science and technology could be appropriately used in order to achieve sustainability. Nevertheless, it did not. Furthermore, the issue of how the international agreements could be enforced were not addressd in the declaration. It was therefore unclear whether or not these agreements could actually solve political sovereignty problems. Moreover, the issue of market economy, which was seen in the preparation report as the cause of problems, was not addressed in the declaration at all.

3.4 Brundtland 1987: Our Common Future

The term "sustainable development" was first seriously defined and discussed in the report called "Our Common Future" of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. The report is known as the Brundtland report as the chairperson of the commission at that time was Madame Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway.

3.4.1 The Concept

In the report, sustainable development was defined as:

> development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. It contains within two keys concepts:
> - the concept of "needs", in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
> - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.
>
> (WCED 1987: 43)

To meet human needs was the central issue of development, and "meeting essential needs depends in part on achieving full growth potential, and sustainable development clearly requires economic growth…" (ibid: 44). Although "economic growth and development obviously involve changes in the physical ecosystem, (for instance), a forest may be depleted in one part of a watershed and extended elsewhere…, this does not mean that such resources should not be used… (as) the accumulation of knowledge and the development of technology can enhance the carrying capacity of the resource base" (ibid: 45-46). The analysis of the Brundtland concept can be seen as Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Brundtland Concept of Sustainable Development

```
            ┌───────────────────────────┐
            │  sustainable development  │
            └───────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
            ┌───────────────────────────┐
            │      economic growth      │
            └───────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
          │   enhanced natural resource │
          └─────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
               ┌───────────────────┐
               │    technology     │
               └───────────────────┘
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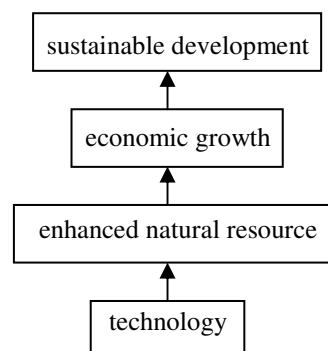
3.4.2 Sustainable Development in the Context of Developing Countries

The report presented: "On the development side, in terms of absolute numbers there are more hungry people in the world than ever before, and their numbers are increasing" (ibid: 2). To solve this problem, therefore, several critical objectives were derived strategically from sustainable development concept. These were:

"reviving growth; changing the quality of growth; meeting essential needs for jobs, food, water, and sanitation; ensuring a sustainable population; conserving and enhancing the resource base; reorienting technology and managing risk; and merging environmental and economic factors in decision making" (ibid: 49). The issue of reviving growth gave emphasis to developing countries where economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental issues are related closely, and "poverty can coexist, and can endanger the environment" (ibid: 44).

In terms of growth quality, economic development in developing countries would be sustainable when vulnerability crises, drought for example, were reduced. The report stated that "vulnerability can be reduced by using technologies that lower production risks" (ibid: 53). In this sense, technology needed to be reoriented because it was "the key link between humans and nature" (ibid: 60). It could, firstly, help developing countries responding more effectively to the challenges of sustainable development, and secondly rectify environmental problems. Furthermore, vulnerability could be reduced by "choosing institutional options that reduce market fluctuations, and by building up reserves, especially of food and foreign exchange" (ibid: 53).

Sustainable development was the pathway to meet human needs. "The most basic of all needs is for livelihoods; that is, employment" (ibid: 54). Increasing employment in developing countries could alleviate poverty because it created a better opportunity for people to attain their livelihoods. However, the issue of livelihoods was related to population growth. In developing countries where population was high, there was a tendency for people to have food security problems. In these countries, birth rates declined with social and economic development. Therefore, in developing countries "population policies should be integrated with other economic and social development programmes" (ibid: 56).

In terms of the relationship between poverty and the environment, the report stated that:

> The tropics, which host the greatest number and diversity of species, also host most developing nations, where population growth is fastest and poverty is most widespread. If farmers in these countries are forced to continue with extensive agriculture, which is inherently unstable and leads to constant movement, then farming will tend to

spread throughout remaining wildlife environments… (For example), Kenya's present population of 20 million people is already pressing so hard on parks that protected land is steadily being lost to invading farmers.

(ibid: 152-153)

In sum, the analysis of "unsustainbility" in developing countries can be seen as Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: Unsustainability in Developing Countries

```
                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │  unsustainability │
                    └──────────────────┘
                             ↑
             ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
             │  natural resource degradation    │
             └─────────────────────────────────┘
                             ↑
                       ┌──────────┐
                       │  poverty │
                       └──────────┘
                             ↑
          ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
   ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
   │ population growth │              │   unemployment    │
   └──────────────────┘              └──────────────────┘
                                               ↑
                                     ┌────────────────────┐
                                     │ low economic growth │
                                     └────────────────────┘
```
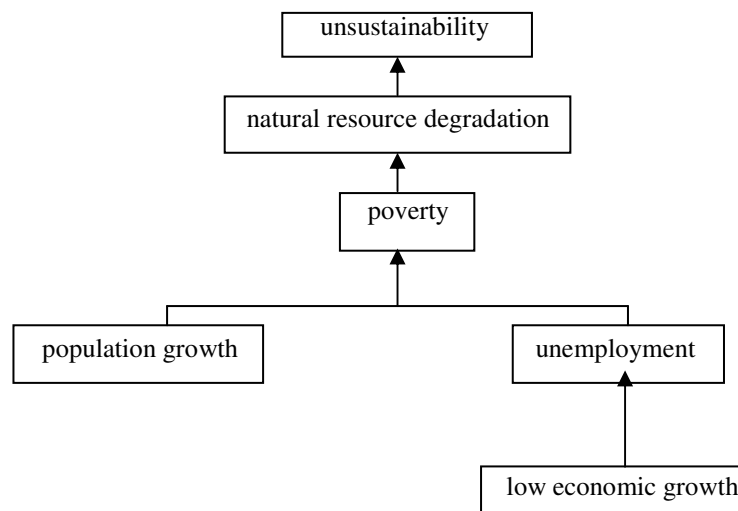
To be sustainable, therefore, growth must be revived in order to solve the unemployment problem, demographic policies must be integrated into economic development planning in order to solve the problem of population growth. Furthermore, in solving the problem of resource depletion:

Many developing nations recognise the need to safeguard threatened species but lack the scientific skill, institutional capacities, and fund necessary for conservation. Industrial nations seeking to reap some of the economic benefits of genetic resources should support the efforts of Third World nations to conserve species; they should also seek ways to help tropical nations-and particularly rural people most directly involved with these species realise some of the economic benefits of these resources.

(ibid: 156-157)

3.5 Rio 1992: Global Programme of Action

Five years after the publication of the Brundtland report, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) known as the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. At the Summit "the world's leaders met to plan the prevention of our Earth's environmental death" (Sitarz 1993: ix). It is argued that the Brundtland report is seen as merely a static document addressing the interrelation of economic development and ecological destruction (ibid) while the Agenda 21 resulting from the Rio Summit is the global programme of action promoting environmentally sustainable economic development (UNCED 1992).

The aims of the Summit were stated in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development as:

> Reaffirming the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm on 16 June 1972, and seeking to build upon it,
> With the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people,
> Working towards international agreements which respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environment and development system,
> Recognising the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home.
>
> (UNCED 1992: 9)

The Summit did not define the concept of sustainable development, nor address the Brundtland report. However, an explanation of the background of the Summit stated:

> Underlying the Earth Summit agreements is the idea that humanity has reached a turning point. We can continue with present policies which are deepening economic divisions within and between countries-which increases poverty, hunger, sickness and illiteracy and cause the continuing deterioration of the ecosystem on which life on Earth depends. Or we can change course.
>
> (ibid: 3)

From this statement it appears that the major problem was "economic divisions within and between countries", or the imbalance of economic development among

countries in the world. The consequences of this problem can be seen in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6: Rio Summit's Problem Analysis

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │ deterioration of ecosystem │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                 ▲
        ┌──────────┬─────────────┴─────────────┬──────────────┐
   ┌─────────┐  ┌─────────┐   ┌─────────┐        ┌──────────┐
   │ poverty │  │ hunger  │   │ sickness │        │ illiteracy│
   └─────────┘  └─────────┘   └─────────┘        └──────────┘
        ▲           ▲              ▲                   ▲
        └───────────┴──────┬───────┴───────────────────┘
                    ┌───────────────────────────────┐
                    │ imbalanced economic development │
                    └───────────────────────────────┘
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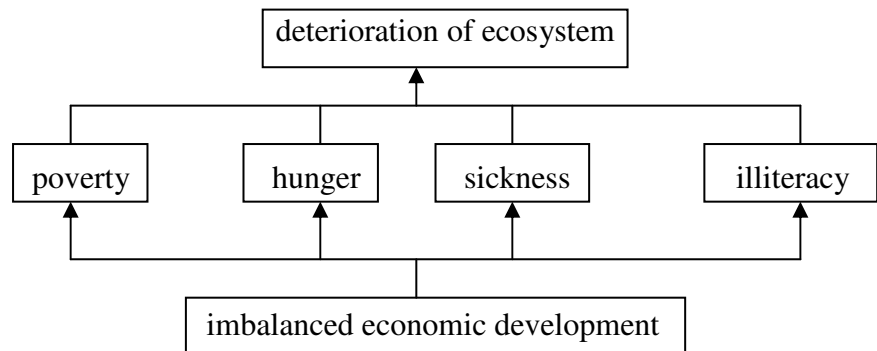
This Figure is the analysis of unsustainability. However, "we can better manage and protect the ecosystem and bring about a more prosperous future for us all" (ibid: 3). To attain the prosperous future, or to attain sustainability, the root cause of the problem - an imbalanced economic development - needed to be rectified. Sustainable development, in terms the Rio Summit, then, can be seen in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Rio Summit's Sustainable Development

```
              ┌────────────────────────┐
              │ sustainable development │
              └────────────────────────┘
                          ▲
              ┌────────────────────────┐
              │   enhanced ecosystem    │
              └────────────────────────┘
                          ▲
              ┌────────────────────────┐
              │   poverty alleviation   │
              └────────────────────────┘
                          ▲
            ┌──────────────────────────────┐
            │ balanced economic development │
            └──────────────────────────────┘
```
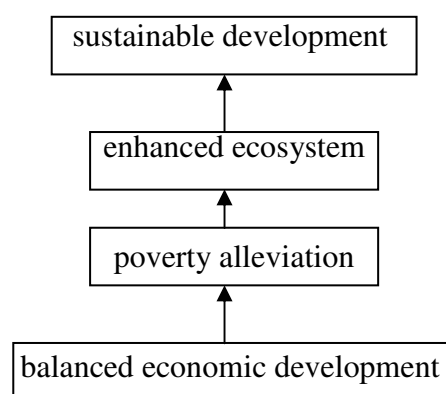
To balance economic development, or to bring about "equitable world economy" (ibid: 19), "states should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental

degradation" (Principle 12). As "no nation can achieve this on its own" (ibid: 3), a global partnership building up was therefore seen as a means to setting up agreements an agenda leading to sustainable development.

As economic development was vital to sustainability, economic instruments were suggested to rectify the problems. These instruments were trade liberalisation in order to balance the global economy, and the internalisation of environmental costs in order to reduce environmental problems. By these processes, "the special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority" (Principle 6).

3.6 Johannesburg 2002: It's just the beginning

In the preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, Mr. Kofi A. Anan, the United Nations Secretary-General, indicated that:

> Ten years ago at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, governments committed themselves to Agenda 21 as the comprehensive plan of action… But commitments alone have proven insufficient… Johannesburg Summit is an opportunity to rejuvenate the quest to a more sustainable future. The Summit must bring the world together, and forge more cohesive global partnerships for implementation of Agenda 21.
>
> (UN 2001)

Furthermore, Nitin Desai, the Summit Secretary-General, stated that "we knew from the beginning of the Johannesburg process that the Summit would not produce any new treaties or any momentous breakthrough" (UN 2002b: 1). "What the world wanted… was not a new philosophical or political debate but rather, a summit of actions and results" (ibid). Thus, the aim of the Johannesburg Summit was to "reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development" (The Johannesburg Declaration).

The Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration are seen as a significant milestones for sustainable development. The only problem of this milestone is that the principles of sustainable development have never been successfully implemented. The

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation based on Agenda 21 is therefore, as Kofi Anan said, "just the beginning" (UN 2001).

As following Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Summit did not define the concept of sustainable development. However, the concept was implied in its analysis of unsustainability. It was stated in the section called "The Challenges we Face" in the declaration that "the deep fault line that divides human society between the rich and the poor and the ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds pose a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability" (number 12). Moreover, "the global environment continues to suffer" (number 13). These problems had resulted from poverty and false consumption and production patterns, which had negative impacts on natural resources and the environment.

In terms of economic development, it was stated that:

> Globalisation has added a new dimension to these challenges. The rapid integration of markets, mobility of capital and significant increases in investment flows around the world have opened new challenges and opportunities for the pursuit of sustainable development. But the benefits and costs of globalisation are unevenly distributed, with developing countries facing special difficulties in meeting this challenges.
>
> (number 14)

The declaration argued that these situations were "global disparities" (number 15) which brought the world to a state of unsustainaility. This analysis can be seen as Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8: The Johannesburg Summit Analysis of Unsustainability
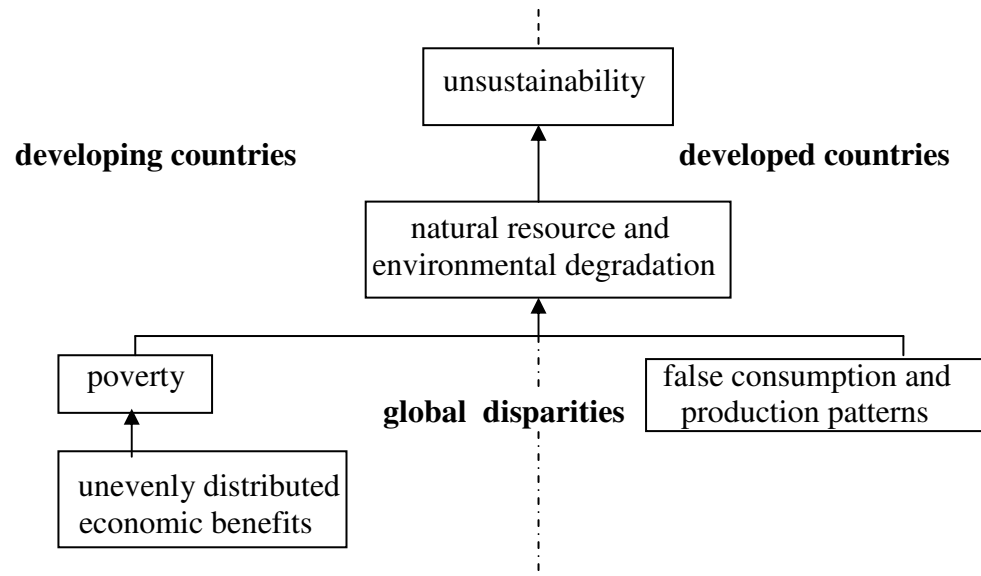
To be sustainable, economic benefits must be distributed to developing countries, and environmental concerns must go along with economic development planning in those developed ones.

3.7 From Rachel Carson to Johannesburg: An Analysis of A Global Discourse

From Silent Spring in 1962 to the Johannesburg Summit in 2002 the interactions of development and the environment, and its related issues, both problems and solutions, have been discussed. A summary of issues leading to unsustainability as identified and analysed by different events (significant literature, conferences, reports and summits) can be seen in Table 3.2 on page 32.

The major issues running through different events are environmental problems, resource scarcity, inequity, poverty, and population growth. These issues can be analysed as two main discourses; The Earth discourse, and Equity discourse.

Table 3.2: The Causes of Unsustainability

Event/Issue	Environmental problems	Resource scarcity	The use of science	Market economy (e.g. free trade)	Industrialisation	Political sovereignty	Poverty	Population growth	Unemployment	(economic) Inequity between the developed and the developing
Silent Spring (1962)	*		*	*	*					
Stockholm (1972)	*	*	*	*	*	*				
Brundtland (1987)	*	*					*	*	*	*
Rio de Janeiro (1992)	*	*					*	*		*
Johannesburg (2002)	*	*					*	*		*

3.7.1 The Earth Discourse

The Earth discourse is represented by resource scarcity and environmental problems issues. This discourse was first addressed in the "Silent Spring". It gives emphasis to the interconnectedness of living species in the ecosystem, and the interrelation between the system and human beings. The destruction of the ecosystem resulting from human beings' behaviour will destroy the Earth and human beings in turn.

As the ecosystem in which natural resources inhabit does not have a boundary, the system belongs to everyone on Earth. Therefore, everyone has a responsibility to preserve and maintain the richness of the system, which results in the maintaining of one's life in turn. This discourse is also represented by the catchphrase of each event, for instance, "Only One Earth" of the Stockholm conference, "From One Earth to One World" of the Brundtland report, "Earth Summit", and so on.

3.7.2 Equity Discourse

The issue of inequity has been addressed from the Stockholm conference onward. The main issue stated in these global events is inequity in development among different countries. This issue is represented by the terms developed countries and underdeveloped or developing countries. The emphasis of this issue is on inequity in economic development, represented by the terms the rich and the poor. According to the global analysis on unsustainability, from the Stockholm conference to the Johannesburg Summit, a state of being underdeveloped has resulted from poverty and population growth. This analysis can be seen as Figure 3.9.

Figure 3.9: Equity Discourse
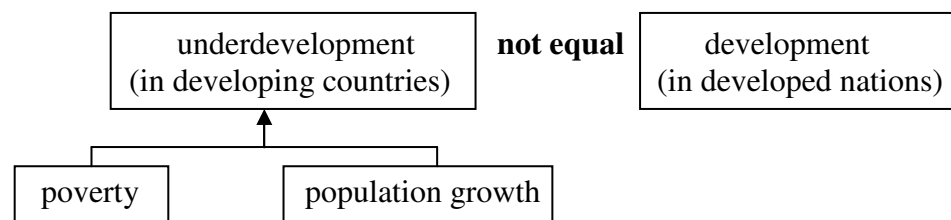
3.7.3 Equity on Earth: Economic Discourse

Yet the global concept of sustainable development comprises two major discourses; the Earth and Equity. The global conferences and summits seem to argue that if developing and developed countries have equity in terms of the economy, poverty in developing countries will be eliminated. As a result, natural resources in developing countries are less likely to be be destroyed in the persuit of economic gain.

As arguing by the global discourse that everyone must be responsible for the Earth, they have to be responsible for building up global equity. That is; all nations must have an equal opportunity to develop their economy so that unemployment and poverty which are the causes of inequity in development will be eliminated. This global discourse supports the use of economic instruments such as trade liberalisation in order to bring about economic equity between the developed and the developing. In the context of environmental problem rectification in developed countries, economic instruments such as the internalisation of environmental costs is seen as the means to bring about equity between the environment and human beings. Economic development is then seen as a means to attain economic and environmental equity on Earth - sustainable development. The global sustainable development discourse can be summarised as Figure 3.10 on page 35.

Nevertheless, it must be noted here that the issues like political sovereignty, the misuse of science, and market economy that once were seen as causes of unsustainability are not regarded as problems by the global institutions anymore. Rather, some certain issues, market economy for instance, are seen as solutions.

Figure 3.10 Global Sustainable Development Discourse

```
                          ┌──────────────────┐
                          │  Sustainability  │
                          └──────────────────┘
                                   ▲
                             ┌──────────┐
                             │  Equity  │
                             └──────────┘
                                   ▲
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
┌──────────────────────┐              ┌───────────────────────────┐
│  Poverty alleviation  │             │  Environmental problems    │
└──────────────────────┘              │  Rectification             │
                                      └───────────────────────────┘
           ▲                                        ▲
  *Developing countries*                   *Developed countries*
       *context*                                *context*

┌──────────────────────┐              ┌───────────────────────────┐
│  Trade liberalisation │             │  Environmental instruments │
└──────────────────────┘              └───────────────────────────┘
           ▲                                        ▲
        ┌────────────────────────────────────────────┐
              ┌─────────────────────────┐
              │   Economic development  │
              └─────────────────────────┘
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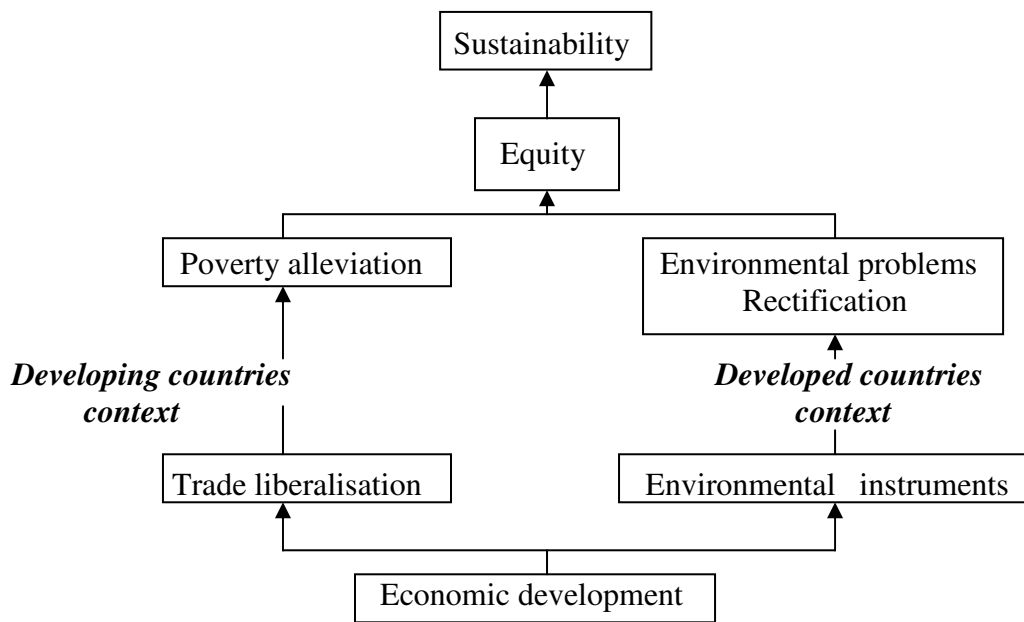
3.8 Summary

This chapter is an analysis of global sustainable development discourse. It is found that the discourse consists of two main sub-discourses; the Earth and Equity. To be sustainable, global development must lead to an equitable world in which humans and the ecosystem are living together in harmony, and developing countries have the same opportunity to develop their well-being as the developed. To attain these two notions of equity, economic development is seen as the means.

Chapter 4: In the Field

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the perspective on sustainability and sustainable development in the context of rural community development of two people's organisations, namely Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives and Community Forest Committee, of Mae Tha community. The process by which the issues have been explored is based on the farmers' analysis of problems, causes, and solutions, initiated by the NGO NorthNet Foundation in the 1980's and described by the villagers to the researcher during field research. Secondary data about Mae Tha community from various sources, namely NorthNet's reports and academic researches on Mae Tha organic farming, have been used. The historical account of the community has been drawn from discussions with NorthNet staff and interviews with the villagers.

4.2 The Land Before Time

Mae Tha village is located in Mae-On, a branch-district of Chiang Mai province in the upper north of Thailand. It lies in a valley, flanked by the Doi Khun Tan range on the west and Mae Ta Krai range on the east. The village is 62 kilometres to the northwest of Chiang Mai.

In the past, prior to 1857 when the village was established, native people in the Mae Tha were *Yang Deang*, the Karen. They were the only ones occupying the area. They practised shifting agriculture and did not have any permanent settlements. They were followed by Thai people from the south of the valley, settled into the lower area of the valley and practised lowland rice cultivation as well as growing fruits and vegetables. In early times, they practised communal methods of sharing forestland as a place to collect firewood, and as a place in which to gather vegetables and mushrooms.

They believed that spirits were part of their way of life and they formed a balanced relationship with nature. They also believed that nature had its guardian spirits. If they wanted to make use of nature, such as cutting a tree for building a house, they had to pay homage and asked for permission from the spirits. If not,

they would be punished. The belief also created a sense of community. This can be seen from the traditional water management system. In Mae Tha, there was a stream called *Nam Mae Tha*, Mae Tha river literally. When lowland people migrated to the community, they together dug a branch stream from *Nam Mae Tha* to their farming areas. Every year after the cultivation, they had a ceremony called *Liang Phi Khun Nam*, or paying homage to the river spirit. In the ceremony, they thanked the spirit for giving them water for farming, then they provided food and drink to the spirit. It required everyone in the community to participate because the stream and water belonged to the community, not any individual. After the ceremony they ate and drank together.

4.3 The Development of People's Organisations

4.3.1 The Coming of Strangers

The development of Mae Tha people's organisations traces back to 1986 when a small local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called *Northern Thailand Rural Development Coalition* (now NorthNet Foundation) came to the village. Consisting of a few free-minded intellectual-cum-activists, NorthNet came to the village with an intention to work toward "a peaceful and happy society where the people in the project areas enjoy a livelihood based on stems of production and agricultural practices that are in harmony with nature and surroundings; where the people enjoy equal right and liberty and are still helping and supporting each other" (Tantiwiramanond 1999). Despite this philosophy, the staff members did not have any "blueprint" to impose on the village and people. Rather, they practised a bottom-up development process.

> *"NorthNet didn't do any development project, but did a community study. They (NorthNet staff) didn't define what to do in the future. They asked, and the answers came from the villagers. They asked what we wanted."*
>
> *(Mae Tha farmer)*

The first issue arising from working with the NGO was that the villagers had not enough rice for family consumption. The first activity was therefore an establishment of a *Community Rice Bank*. Since then, as NorthNet encouraged the villagers to work in groups so that they could share and learn from each other, many activity groups such as a credit saving scheme, and a cattle bank were

established. These early activities were initiated in response to the community's immediate problem, which was "having not enough to eat".

The question of why they had not enough to eat was imposed. After a series of problem analyses facilitated by NorthNet staff between 1986-1987, it was revealed that in the past, between 1857 and 1957, the Thai government granted a British logging company called Bombay Burma Limited a concession to cut trees in forest areas that contained, in particular, large and medium-sized teak trees. This felling continued until such time that no teak trees were left standing. Besides this, the advent of railway transport caused numerous trees to be cut and used for making railway tracks. These and many activities concerning railroad construction made the people in the community think that the government owned the forest. When logging activities frantically increased, the number of forest fauna greatly decreased correspondingly. The people in the community began to reduce their dependence on the forest. Because of the severe tree logging, the forest was cleared and opened for reservation of new communities. These communities consisted of settlers from other areas. Another significant impact was the decrease in their traditional beliefs in forest and water spirits (Macgillivray 1999).

Furthermore, between 1957 to 1987 after the transport of logs had created a convenient access to the community, economic crops began to be promoted in Mae Tha. These crops included tobacco and baby corn, produced through a contract farming approach. Tobacco production facilitated the construction of tobacco leaf curing barns in the community, which caused further increases in cutting of trees for firewood. Pesticides and fertilisers were used. Contract farming also promoted the growing of other cash crops such as peanuts, ginger and pepper. As a consequence, there was further encroachment of the forest because the villagers wanted to cultivate more crops in a greater area in order to have greater yield. The way they practised monoculture, tobacco for instance, started when a tobacco company came to the community promoting tobacco growing. The tobacco company provided the villagers with free seeds, fertilisers, and technological assistance in the first two years. In this way the villagers were encouraged to turn their heads to tobacco growing. However, the price of tobacco

production was set by the company. It was a good price at the beginning. After a lot of villagers had been growing tobacco for a while, the company stopped providing assistance. The villagers then had to purchase seeds and fertilisers. As a consequence the production costs increased, while the selling price remained the same as at the beginning. The villagers could not negotiate, as the tobacco company was their sole market. They had become dependent on the company.

Furthermore, tobacco required a high use of pesticides due to the vulnerability of tobacco to disease. It caused severe health problems, as one of the villagers stated:

> *"I was always spraying the chemicals in the farm. The next day I had a headache, lost my appetite, and felt frustrated and grumpy. I thought it's not just me, but my wife also. When she picked the tobacco in the morning, she also smelled of chemicals."*

Another cash crop that has been promoted since the 1980s is baby corn. It is commonly known as *Khao Pod Rai Yaad*, a corn with no relative. Because it is labour intensive, villagers have to spend most of their time on cultivation, and have little spare time for village activities. Moreover, baby corn requires a high use of fertilisers and overcropping has resulted in a decline in soil productivity.

As a Buddhist community, the villagers also realised that practising chemical agriculture was committing a sin because chemicals killed life, as one of the villagers said:

> *"Chemical farming is a sin because small animals and insects are killed, as well as people in the end because the products contain chemicals."*

Starting from the problem of "not enough to eat", the villagers have analysed their problems as seen in Figure 4.1. This figure is summarised by the researcher, based on the villagers' analysis of what had happened to their farming practices.

Figure 4.1: Villagers' Problem analysis
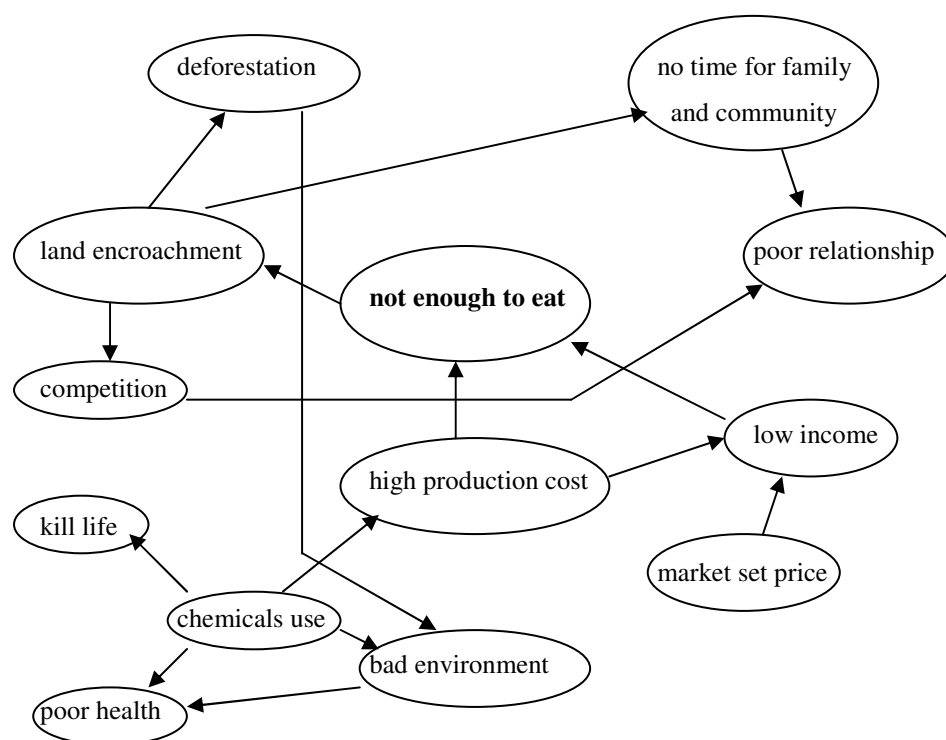
The villagers also said that their problem was not merely that they had not enough to eat, but that they had lost their *happiness and livelihood*. The root cause of the problem was that *they produced for market, not for themselves.* Once they had started producing for market, the market ruled production processes and also their lives. They became dependent on the market. As a result of the problem analysis that had been initiated by NorthNet, some villagers started to think about the livelihood of people in the past.

4.3.2 The Way We Were

One of the villagers said: *"I think about how people in the past lived without money. They didn't die."* They therefore started to revitalise the way their older generations lived. The first thing they had realised was that their older generations did not practice chemical agriculture. Secondly, the main purpose of farming was for family consumption. Thirdly, people in the past grew everything they wanted to eat. With these three components, the older generations were not dependent on external factors. Furthermore, they did not destroy natural resources because they did not need large amounts of land for farming. Rather, they conserved the forest

because it was the place in which they could collect vegetables and other necessities for life. In sum, the way they were is opposite to the problems they analysed, which has been summarised Figure 4.2 – the 'good old days'.

Figure 4.2: The 'Good Old Days'
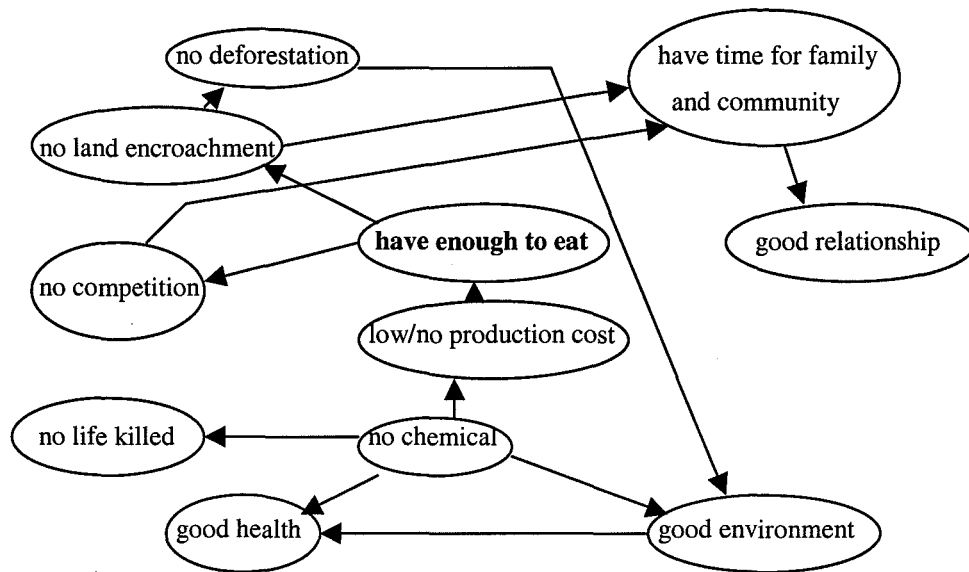
As a result of this thinking, they started practising *diversified organic farming*. In doing so, apart from being non-chemical, they have grown different kinds of varieties for their family consumption, as the villagers said, *"we grow everything we need, we eat everything we grow"* and *"if we have left over, we sell it"*. Diversified organic farming practice has been corresponding directly to the idea of "having enough to eat" and "good health".

4.3.3 A League of Their Own

In 1993, ten families of organic farmers started to form themselves as an *organic farmers' group*. The aims were to help each other in production processes, and to promote organic farming and organic products. The initial activities of the group were:

    1. Production

        1.1 Farm Inspecting: committee visited members' farms in order to discuss production problems of each farm, and find solutions together.

1.2 Manure and compost producing.

1.3 Experimenting and practising alternative pest management (bio-control).

2. Packaging and marketing of organic products.

3. Fund: each member pooled their income from organic products one baht per kilogram into the fund (one NZ dollar is the equivalent of twenty-three bahts approximately). The use of the fund varied, but needed to be agreed by members.

Nowadays, there are seven organic farmers' groups in Mae Tha, and they have formed themselves as *Mae Tha Organic Farmers' Network*. The aims of the network are not different from those of the group. The advantages of having the network are, firstly, it can help solve individual or group problems that individual and groups cannot solve, and secondly the network committee can act as the representative when contacting organisations or groups outside the village, for example, organic consumers' groups, network of northern Thailand farmers, and NGOs. It acts like an *umbrella* of the groups. The structure of the network can be seen in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Structure of Mae Tha Organic Farmers' Network
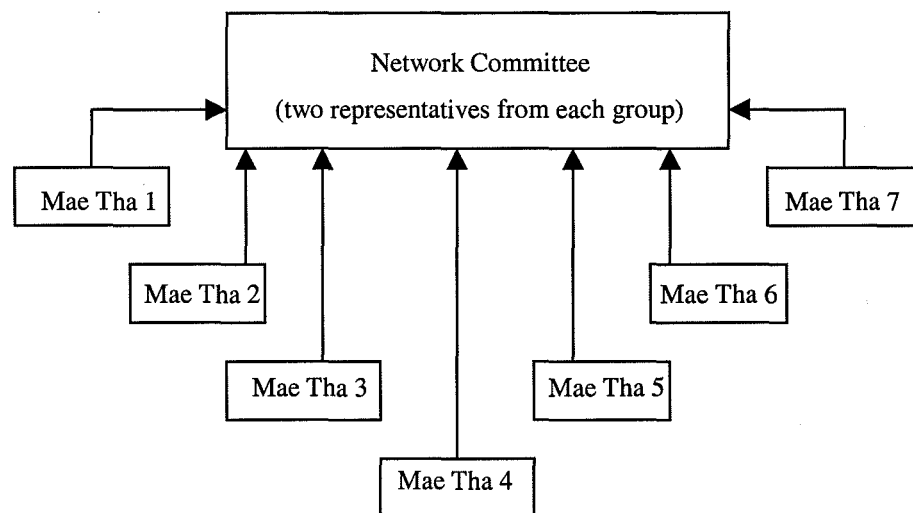
Source: Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives' Organisational Chart (see Appendix 2)

Based on the field research, the interactions of members, groups, and the network is summarised in Figure 4.4. The villagers explained that within and between groups, members interact to one another in terms of helping and sharing with each other in farming practices. The network committee acts as the members' representative when members need help or facilitation from outside the community.

Figure 4.4: Interactions of Individual, Group, and Network
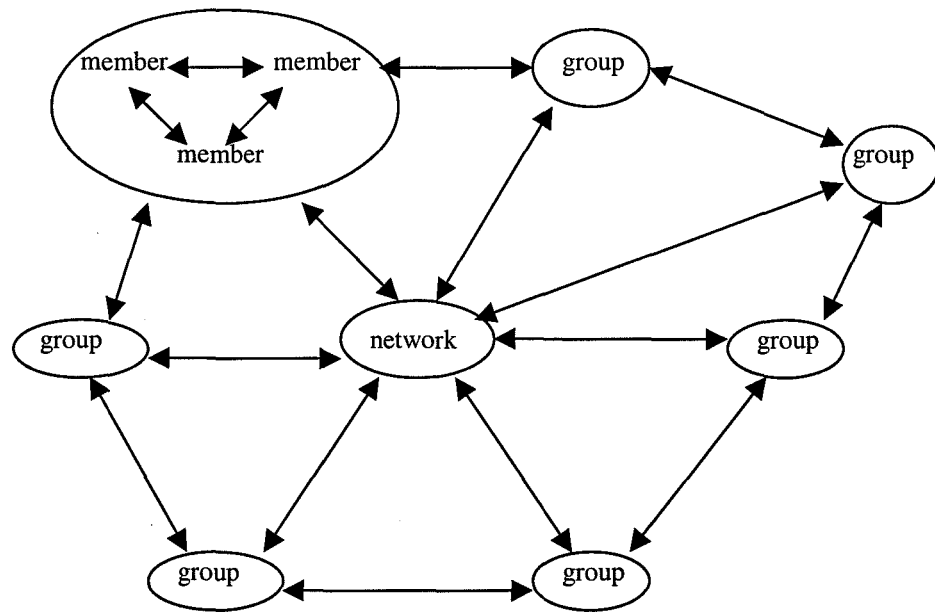
Recently, in January 2001, the network registered itself with the Thai government as a cooperative. The main reason of registration is *to legalise* itself and *to be seen* by the government so that it is accepted as a people's organisation, and can access government support. Furthermore, it can promote organic farming to non-organic farmers because everyone can be a member of the cooperatives, not only organic farmers. The structure of the cooperatives follows the structure of the network; that is, there are two representatives from each organic farmers' group. The difference is that it is more formalised. The structure of the cooperatives is summarised in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: Structure of the Cooperatives


```
                        ┌─────────────────────────┐
                        │  Implementing Committee │
                        └─────────────┬───────────┘
        ┌─────────────────────────────┼───────────────────────────┐
┌────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────┐    ┌────────────────────┐
│ Planning and       │    │ Marketing Planning   │    │ Human resource/    │
│ management         │    │ and administration   │    │ agricultural       │
│ of fund            │    │                      │    │ extension          │
└─────────┬──────────┘    └──────────┬───────────┘    └────────────────────┘
     ┌────┴────┐                      │
┌──────────┐ ┌────────────┐           │
│fund      │ │credit/loans│           │
│raising   │ │            │           │
└──────────┘ └────────────┘           │
        ┌──────────┬──────────────────┼──────────┬──────────────────┐
  ┌──────────┐ ┌─────────────────┐ ┌─────────┐ ┌────────────────────┐
  │production│ │ food processing │ │marketing│ │ organic products   │
  └──────────┘ └─────────────────┘ └─────────┘ │ certification scheme│
                                                └────────────────────┘
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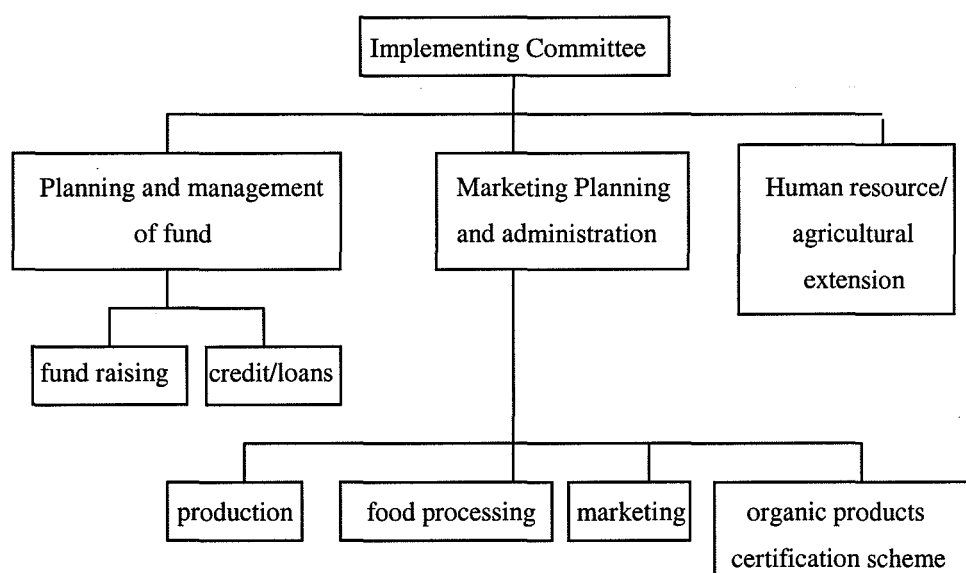
Source: Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives' Organisational Chart

4.3.4 Land and Forest Management

For Mae Tha people, their lives are secure when they are free from suffering, and they will be free from suffering when they *mii khao kin mii pan din yu*, literally have rice to eat and land on which to stay. Mae Tha villagers perceive *having rice to eat* or the food security issue holistically, as shown in the "Good Old Days" diagram. They do not mean only having, but having in a proper way.

Having rice and having land are interconnected. Farmers cannot have rice if they do not have land to stay in and to grow. This is a crucial issue for Mae Tha people. People of Mae Tha have been on their land for many generations. According to the Thai law, they are illegally occupying the land. They do not have land title. As a result they do not have legal rights to managing the land use.

Despite no land title, the villagers have their own process of managing land and forest. They have a *Community Forest* managed by a *Community Forest Committee.*

The villagers divide the land and the forest into four parts (see Figure 4.6). The idea is to use the land and forest in a proper manner. The conservation area is the

44

area that *none will touch* because it is a source of biodiversity and fertility. They also believe that this area is a sacred forest where forest and community guardian spirits inhabit. The community forest is a utilising forest. Villagers can collect mushrooms, vegetables, herbs, and fuel wood from there. Trees in the community forest can be cut for construction of houses and shelters. However, this does not mean that the villagers can use the forest whenever they wish. They have to put a proposal to the community forest committee, and the proposal needs to be approved by the committee.

Figure 4.6: Land and Forest Use

Mae Ta Krai National Park

Doi Khun Tan National Park
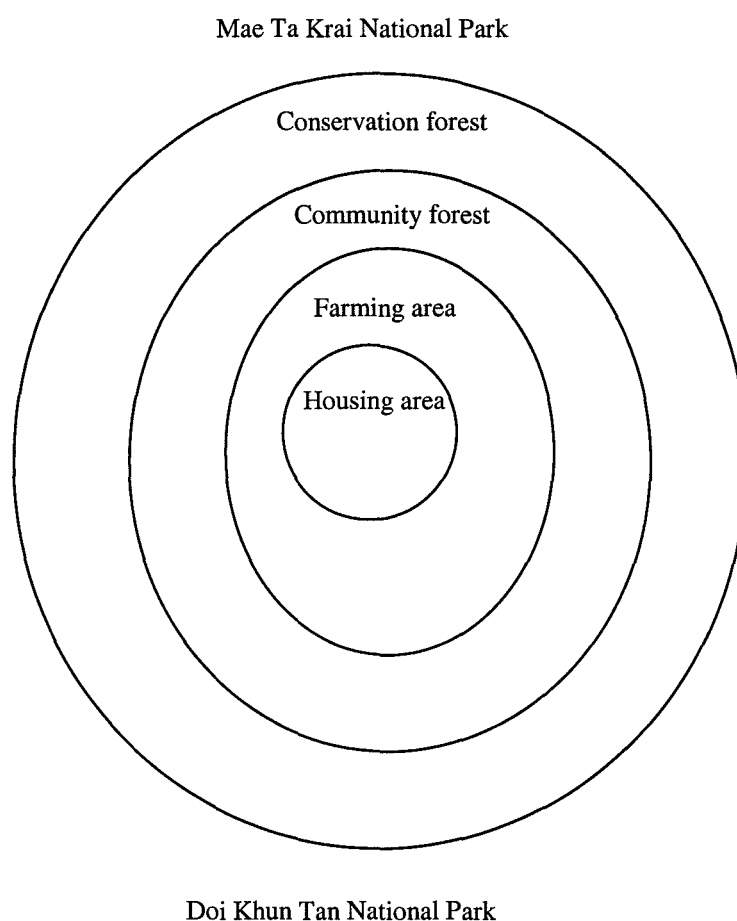
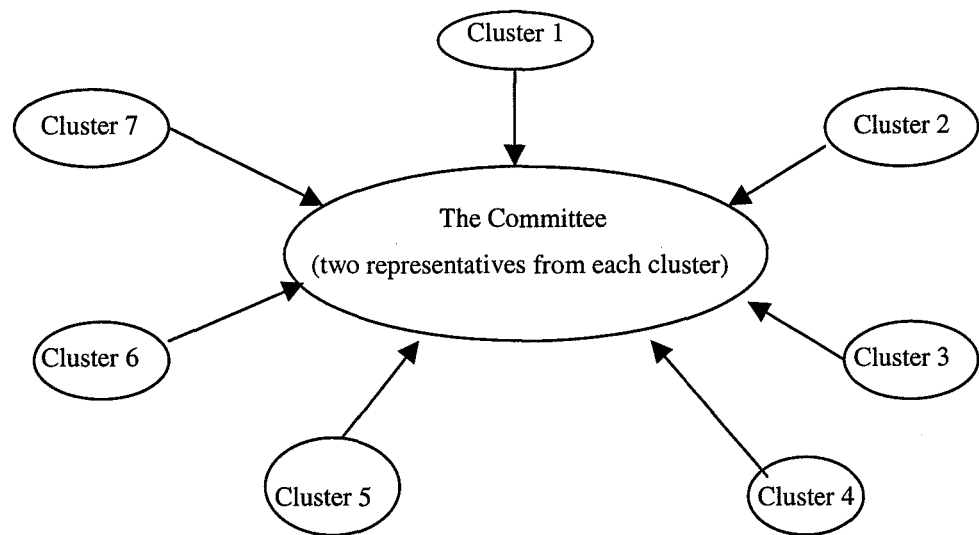*Source*: Community Forest Committee's Organisational Chart

Mae Tha village has seven clusters. Each cluster, by election, has its own forest committee, and two representatives from each cluster will be Mae Tha Community Forest Committee members (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7: Structure of Community Forest Committee

Source: Summarised by the researcher, based on the information gained from the Community Forest Committee

Mae Tha is surrounded by two national parks, the Ma Ta Krai and the Doi Khun Tan. Currently the government wants to expand the protected area by including the village's farming area, community forest and conservation forest into the national parks. The government claims that the villagers cannot stay *within* the forest because they always destroy it. But the villagers insist that they never and never will because, as the chairperson of the committee said:

> *Forest is everything for us. It's a supermarket. It's a source of our lives. How can we destroy it then? It's proven that forest in this country has been destroyed by government policies and management. Mae Tha forest is the example.*

Mae Tha forest is not the only forest that will be included in national parks. It is now happening all over the country, particularly in the north where the forest is still rich. As the Mae Tha Community Forest Committee is a member of Northern Thailand Community Forest Regional Network, and the chair person of Mae Tha's is the chairperson of the regional network, they work together to *fight* for *their* land and forest by proposing the *Community Forest Bill* addressing a co-management strategy between the government and local people. They have been

fighting for five years, but the proposed Bill has not yet been approved. If one day their land and forest are taken away, that day, as they said, "*blood will flow*".

The community forest committee was part of the farmers' network. Because the forest issue has become more serious, the community forest committee has separated itself so that it can network with the community forests of other villages easily. Despite separation, the farmers' network and the community forest committee share many resource persons. The separation is for management reasons only. Based on the information gained from the Cooperatives and Community Forest Committees, Figure 4.8 is a summary of the relationship between the two people's organisations and the villagers, NGOs, and regional networks of people's organisations.

Figure 4.8: Management of Mae Tha People's Organisations
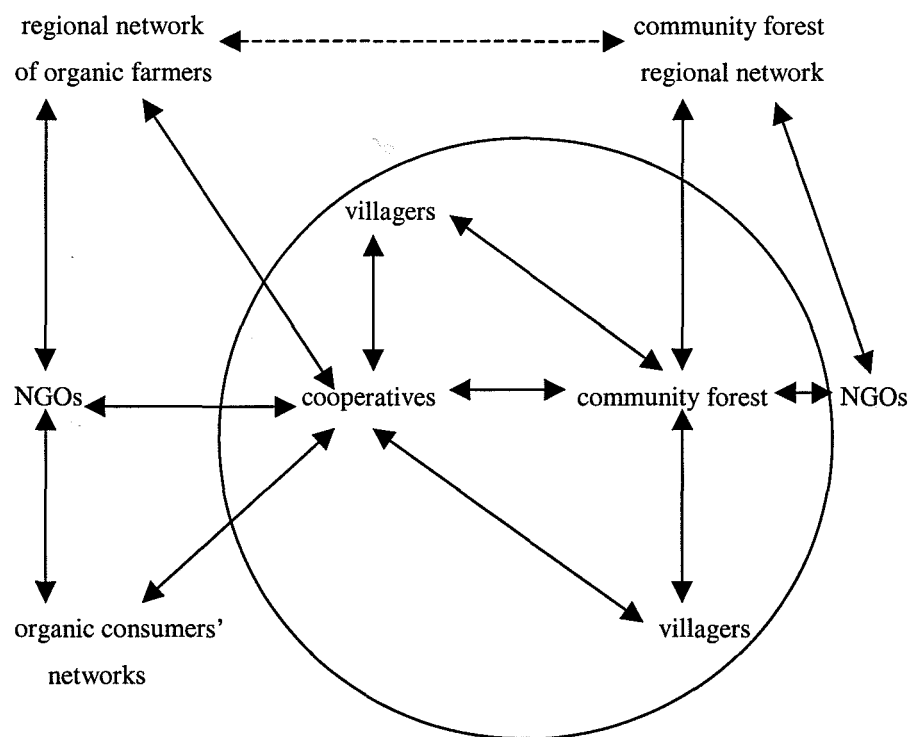
4.4 The Brave New World

The indicators of the achievement can be seen in the cooperatives' organisational chart (see Appendix 3). This was developed by the cooperatives members when the cooperatives were an organic farmers' network. The aim of developing this chart was to visualise their goal, and promote this goal to community members. It consists of three parts. The first part is a picture of rice paddies with a water buffalo in, surrounded with forest. There are two words in the picture; "the environment" and "food production". The second part is a picture of rice bank, community shop, money bag with the term "credit scheme" on, agricultural products, group meeting, and the temple with people coming in and out. The last one is a picture of people, adults and children, working and enjoying themselves, with the word "way of living" on.

The villagers explained to the researcher that what they want to attain in the future is *happiness*. Their happiness comprises land, food security, good environment, peacefulness, a good economy, and an active people's organisation. They explained that good economy meant *ru jak por, knowing when to stop, knowing what sufficiency means*. Therefore the second picture consisted of money, a group meeting, and the temple. It means that the economy will be good only when it is controlled by religious belief and group processes.

Children were on the picture. One of the villagers said:

> *"what I'm doing today is actually for my daughter. I don't want her to be dependent on the outsiders. People sent their children to have a good education in town, but those children never come back. They are now in business and industrial employment. They have to do what their companies want them to do. That's independent. One day those companies may come to our village, occupy our land. Our children may come back home then, to work on their parents' land, not for themselves but for those companies. I don't want to see it happening."*

Therefore, the two people's organisations have involved youth in their activities. Some young people are now active in community forest activities, some are

helping their parents on organic farms, and some are active in the cooperatives. There are two main reasons for doing so: to encourage the younger generation to learn; and to pass *the duties* of this generation onto them.

In terms of politics, the villagers explained to the researcher that they divided community groups and organisations into three categories (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9: Categories of Community Groups
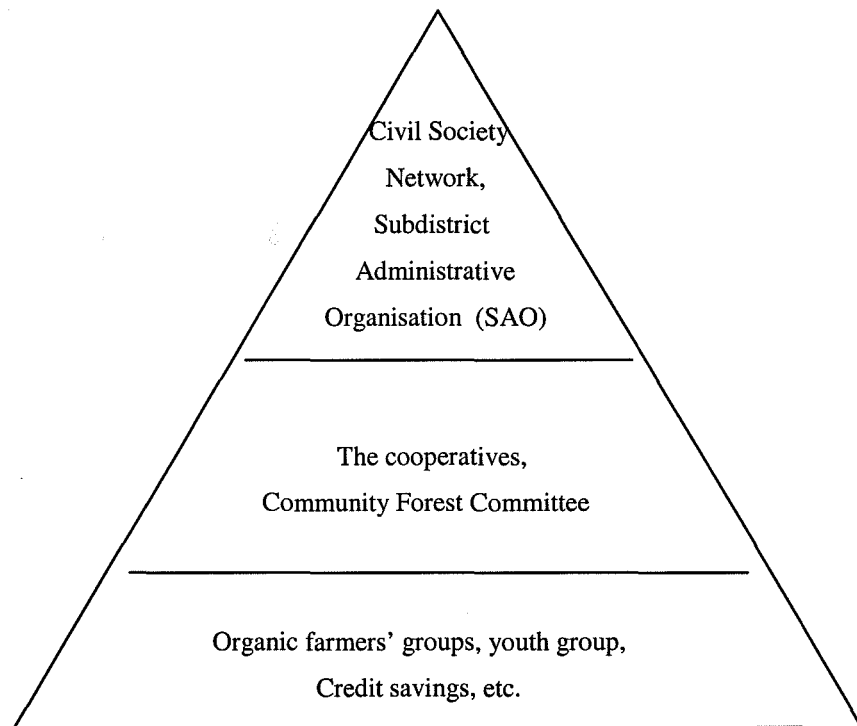
Civil Society
Network,
Subdistrict
Administrative
Organisation (SAO)

The cooperatives,
Community Forest Committee

Organic farmers' groups, youth group,
Credit savings, etc.

Source: Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives' Organisational Chart (see Appendix 4)

The top level is regarded as the community *policy* level. The civil society network is a network of different existing groups in the community. Everyone is member. It is a forum for the villagers to discuss, share, exchange, and sometime argue, about every issue in the community. Community problems and direction are discussed here. However, this network is an informal network, not officially recognised by for example the government. The Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) is an official organisation, a local government.

Although organic farming has proven that it can bring about a better livelihood, not everyone practices it. There are many reasons for this. One of those is the local government do not have any policy to promote organic agriculture. Therefore, in the last two years the cooperatives and community forest committee nominated their members to be elected to be local government members. The main reason for doing so was to influence agricultural policymaking at the community level. Seven out of fifteen were elected. As organic farming is getting to be known and seen more and more, it is hoped that organic farmers will someday become policymakers at local level.

4.5 Sustainability and Sustainable Development in the context of Mae Tha People's Organisations

The very key term Mae Tha people frequently used when talking about sustainability was *"mii khao kin mii pan din yu"*, having rice to eat and having land on which to stay. This concept is clearly represented in the works of the two people's organisations; the cooperatives, and the community forest committee.

The people of Mae Tha named their cooperatives as Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives. This name reveals that the villagers have their concept of sustainability and sustainable development. From the field information, it is shown that the central issue of sustainable development of Mae Tha is "control". According to their problem analyses, their livelihood and community development processes in the past were controlled by the outsiders, namely government policies and agricultural companies, and this control caused many problems. It was unsustainable development. To be sustainable, they must have control over their livelihood and community development processes; that is, they must have control over agricultural processes and food supply, and land use and natural resource management. To have control, knowledge used in development processes must be from local people, not from the outsiders.

In sum, the local community must be politically autonomous. To be autonomous, local people must form themselves as people's organisations, and network these organisations from village level to national level in order to propose the government development policies based on their perspectives, and to negotiate

and fight with the dominating political and development paradigm that have governed their lives for a long time.

Grassroots farmers of Mae Tha community perceive that sustainability will be attained when they have enough rice to eat and have land on which to stay. However, the more important thing than having rice and land is "how" to have them. This is the issue of what the "means" to attain sustainability are, sustainable development in the other words.

4.6 Summary

Mae Tha villagers believe that sustainable development is about having enough to eat, control over land and about the means of attain those things. The power to control their own livelihoods is essential to attain these outcomes. This point of view results from the fact that their lives and livelihoods in the past were controlled by the outsider, namely the centralised development policy of the Thai government. To have control over their own lives and livelihoods, they have to have control over agricultural processes and food supply, land and natural resource management, and knowledge used in development processes. Furthermore, to have this control, grassroots farmers need to be politically strengthened through people's organisation processes.

Chapter 5: Between the Global and the Grassroots: Thailand's National Development Policy

5.1 Introduction

At Thailand national level, the term "sustainable development" was first seen in the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996). As the national development plan is seen as the institution standing between the global paradigm of sustainable development and that of Mae Tha farmers, this chapter therefore attempts to explore the concept of sustainable development presented in Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans, and the implementing mechanism of the plan, namely the Local Administration Strategy, in the context of rural development.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to determine the Thai governments development policy in order to determine whether such policy can be effective in supporting concepts of sustainable development as defined at grassroots level which is very different from the global definition.

5.2 Early National Economic and Social Development Plans
5.2.1 Thailand: A Legacy of Modernisation

After the World War II world politics divided countries into two opposite sides – the First World democratic and the Second World communist. Both sides competed with one another to expand their geopolitical area on the globe. It was the "Cold War" period.

In terms of economic features, the world after the World War II, as Hulme and Turner (1990) argue, was separated into three parts.

> (The) First World referred to the advanced market economies (e.g. the United States and France), the Second World to centrally-planned economies (e.g. the Soviet Union and Hungary) and the Third World referred to all other nations... (The) Third World countries can be viewed as exhibiting some common features, such as relatively high rates of population growth and significant proportions of their population having low incomes.
>
> (Hulme and Turner 1990: 7-8)

Webster (1990) claims that the Third World countries also shared other characteristics. They were agricultural-based, illiterate, poor and victims of colonialism in the past. These characteristics led the Third World countries to be in a state of "poverty" and "underdevelopment". As a consequence, the Third World countries have become "targets" of development, firstly by First World countries to prevent Third World countries becoming the Second World, then for other political and humanitarian reasons.

Underdevelopment and being poor were seen to be interrelated. Poverty alleviation by increasing income was therefore the goal of development. As the dominating development paradigm in the post-war period was the "modernisation", to be developed meant to be modernised. Development strategies designed by the modernised First World were "capital investment, which leads to productivity increases; the application of science to production and services; the emergence of nation-state and large-scale political and economic organisations and urbanisation"(Shepherd 1998: 1). It, therefore, can be said that the concept of modernisation emphasised economic growth. Development therefore aimed to enhance national economic well-being measured by Gross National Product (GNP) per capita, and the increase of GNP per capita was paralleled with poverty reduction.

Thailand was one of the target countries of the First World's modernisation programme. Bowie and Unger (1997) indicate that:

> The United States began to provide Thailand with significant levels of economic, military, and technical assistance in the 1950s. As the United States grew more concerned about the conflict in Vietnam in the early 1960s, Thailand's importance to Washington increased... From 1950 to 1975, US military aid amounted to over half of total Thai defence expenditures; between 1966 and 1971 US military aid along with World Bank loans provided some one-third of public capital spending. Increasing US military spending in Thailand after 1965 helped boost the construction sector through the 1960s. Foreign loans allowed Thai officials to expand public investment...
> (Bowie and Unger 1997: 135)

Furthermore, in the late 1950's the Thai national development planning body called National Economic Development Council, which is now the Office of

National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), was established with recommendations and assistance from the World Bank. "Growth through trade" orientation then became a dominating paradigm among Thailand's policymakers (Jomo et al 1997). As a consequence, agriculture was seen as a means to trading, which led to the country's economic growth. However, the country's fiscal budget was not put into the development of farming communities; rather, it was "channelled into infrastructure to open up more cultivated land. Investment incentives were mainly offered to agribusiness" (ibid: 60). As a consequence, the cultivated areas increased, resulting in a felling of forest in a large area. As Trébuil (1995: 69) states "about 600,000 hectares of forest were felled annually in the 1960s, more than million in the following decade, and in the 1980s the rate of deforestation still amounted to some 2500,000 hectares a year" (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Changes in Forest Areas in Thailand

Year	Km²	% Country
1960	273,628	53.33
1973	221,707	43.21
1976	198, 417	38.67
1978	175,224	34.15
1982	156,000	30.52
1985	149,053	29.05
1989	143,317	27.95
1991	136,698	26.64

Source: Royal Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Bangkok, presented in Trébuil 1995

But Thailand did not enjoy its export-led agricultural development for very long as agricultural exports faced difficulties from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s (ibid). Thailand was then convinced by the world economy to develop its manufactured exports. This situation led to the Thai government stressing new types of industrial development for the country's economic base (Macgillivray 1999). In this period, resources were put into industrial development while the role of the agricultural sector was declining (Trébuil 1995; Jomo et al 1997) (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Thailand 1960-1993: Changes in Production Structure

(GDP share in percentages, selected years)

	1961	1970	1980	1990	1993
Agriculture	39.8	27.0	20.0	13.6	11.8
Industry	18.7	24.4		37.8	40.8
Services	41.5	48.0	49.9	48.6	47.4
Manufacturing	12.6	16.0	21.7	27.8	31.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Office of National Economic and Social Development Board and Bank of Thailand, presented in Jomo et al 1997

Although the role of the agricultural sector was declining, the Thai government, as Macgillivray (1999) argues, saw the danger in merely depending on the exports. To secure its own domestic markets and help diversify an export market, the government expanded cash crops to include crops such as maize and tobacco. Under the market-oriented paradigm, cash cropping involving contract farming was encouraged. Cash cropping and contract farming associated with the government's policy of crop diversity, became common during the 1970's and 1980's (ibid).

> Cash cropping involves big corporations paying small farmers to raise inputs...so that they can be processed into commodities and exports such as fruits, vegetables and flowers. Food service representatives and middlemen are sent to the countryside and cooperate with community leaders... The local farmers would initiate intensive crop production. During this era of farming, new types of seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, breeds of animals and different kinds of agriculture were introduced to Thai farmers.
>
> (Macgillivray 1999: 11)

The impact of contract farming was initially deforestation as a result of land clearance to expand farming areas. Secondly, there has been an impact on the health of farmers. For example, tobacco growers in northern Thailand experienced health problems through chemical use (Trébuil 1995). Thirdly, there has been increasing debt in the agricultural sector due to high production costs (Trébuil 1995; Macgillivray 1999). Farmers have had to "purchase the technology in order to keep up with the demand of commercial farming, thus making them seek bank

loans. Many were unable to keep up with these loans and fell into debt"
(Macgillivray 1999: 12).

The overall result of the National Economic and Social Development Plans from
the 1960s to the 1980s, in sum, has been:

> characterised by rapid industrialisation combined with a significant
> expansion of service and tertiary activities. This evolution was initially
> made possible through the transfer of considerable "surplus" value from
> the countryside to the capital and its suburbs, where three-quarters of the
> country's industrial activities are concentrated. The average income of the
> resulting middle class is almost ten times that of the average farmer. The
> environmental side-effects, so evident in both town and countryside, have
> been overlooked as just another inevitable "cost" of modernisation.
>
> (Phantumvanit et al 1990, cited in Trébuil 1995: 80)

Table 5.3: Thailand National Economic and Social Development Plans (First – Sixth Plan)

Plan	Concepts	Focal Issues
1-2 (1961-1971)	• Growth theory • Development equates economic growth • Centralised / Top-down planning	• Physical capital asset • International loans and technology transferred • Infrastructure
3-4 (1972-1981)	• Structural adjustment • Centralised / top down planning	• Physical capital asset • International loans and technology transferred • Increased agricultural production for industrial export • Employment • Demographic planning • State security
5-6 (1982-1991)	• Structural adjustment • Redistribution of growth • Export-led economic development	• Physical capital asset • Employment • Industrialisation (Newly Industrialised Countries-NICs) • Exports • Introduction to social issues (Basic needs / Integrated rural development

Source: adapted from Atthakorn 2001 and NESDB 2002

5.3 Sustainable Development in the Thai National Economic and Social Development Plans

5.3.1 The Seventh Plan: An Introduction to Sustainable Development

As the previous national development plans were not successful in terms of facilitating people's well-being, the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) initiated "sustainable development" in the seventh plan (1992-1996). It was stated that in the planning process, the country's development planners started to realise the importance of sustainable development (NESDB 2000a). The plan aimed to balance the three main components of development, which are: first, economic development and income distribution; second, human development and the improvement of quality of life; and third, natural resources enhancement.

Nevertheless, the latter two were not translated into action. In practice, the Thai government still emphasised continuing economic development as "GDP equates to well-being" was still a dominating paradigm. Despite many problems resulting from the previous plans, the GDP of Thailand was high. From 1980 to 1990 GDP growth had an annual average of 7.6% (McDonald 1998). Furthermore, as Thailand is geographically a centre of Southeast Asia, it wanted to see itself as a "regional" centre for financial development (McDonald 1998; Atthakorn 2001). Investment was seen as a means to both maintain and stimulate the economy. Many financial institutions were rising, together with the rapid expansion of credit into the economy. Moreover, the Bank of Thailand introduced the Bangkok International Banking Facility to enable overseas lending to Thai firms with banks acting as intermediaries (Punyaratabandhu 1998). It can be seen that what lay beneath the GDP growth was debt, and this debt led to the country's financial crisis, which also led to the collapse of Asian economy, known as the Asian Crisis in 1997, the beginning year of the eighth national development plan.

5.3.2 The Eighth Plan: The ADB, Free Trade, and Structural Adjustment Programmes

Yet Thailand's development under so-called "sustainable development" has not been sustainable. Furthermore, the crisis in 1997 led to a collapse of many financial institutions and business firms. This collapse caused a huge number of

people to become unemployed. Rural communities, where the majority of those unemployed were from were forced to welcome their "children" back home. At the same time the Thai government started to implement the eighth national development plan (1997-2001).

NESDB (2002a) claims that the eighth plan emphasised human development along with economic development. The ideology behind it was that economic development could not take place unless the people were developed. This concept resulted in the involvement of people in development practice, in a form of co-management between the government and the people in the implementation of development plan. Furthermore, the government argued that the financial and economic crisis in 1997 resulted from an ineffective social structure and bureaucratic system. They therefore needed to be adjusted. These concepts were undoubtedly addressed in the Structural Adjustment Programme of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as the Thai government raised a loan from the ADB to stabilise the country's economy after the crisis.

The major economic policy of the eighth plan was "free trade" (NESDB 2002a). Simon (2002: 87) claims that the essence of neo-liberalism lies in "an economic creed that seeks to deregulate markets as much as possible to promote 'free' trade". This approach arose from the dramatic oil price increases in 1973 and a recession of the world economy which precipitated the so-called "debt crisis" in 1979 (ibid). This situation led the capitalist First World to believe that market mechanism was the best economic regulator. In order to solve the debt crisis, this approach was exported to developing countries via aid policies with "Structural Adjustment Programmes" (SAPs) as the tool.

Shepherd (1998) argues that SAPs were proposed to remove constraints of economic growth. They "have attempted to stabilise inflation-prone economies through deflationary measures; devaluing currency, reducing the money supply, reducing public expenditure, shifting the balance between public and private sector towards the private in all sectors, and increasing exports and reducing imports (ibid: 3). The free trade regime and the SAPs were then exported to solve the crisis in Thailand by the ADB.

5.3.3 The Ninth Plan: Sufficiency Economy?

The ninth national development plan (2002-2006) aims to promote Sufficiency Economy. It is explained that "sufficiency economy means moderation and due consideration in all modes of conduct, and incorporates the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks" (NESDB 2002b). This definition is translated into four objectives.

1. **To promote economic stability and sustainability**. Measures will be taken to strengthen the financial sector and fiscal position of country, along with economic restructuring, to create a strong and self-reliant economy at the grassroots level. The overall economy will be made more competitive through development of the knowledge base.

2. **Establishment of a strong national development foundation** to better enable Thai people to meet the challenges arising from globalisation and other changes. Human resource development, education and health system reforms, the setting up of social protection system are priorities to be implemented. At the same time, popular participation in communities and rural areas will be enhanced to create sustainable urban and rural development networks, improve management of natural resources and the environment, as well as development of appropriate science and technology.

3. **Establishment of good governance at all levels of the Thai society**. Good governance will be fostered based on the principles of efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Emphasis will be placed on the reform of government management systems, the promotion of good corporate management in the private sector, and public participation in the development process, as well as the creation of a political system that is accountable to the public and does not tolerate corruption.

4. **Reduction of Poverty and empowerment of Thai people**. Thai people will be empowered through equal access to education and social services. Employment generation will be supported, leading to increases in incomes. Quality of life will be upgraded. Public sector reform will be undertaken to create an enabling environment for public participation.

The term "sufficiency" is however ambiguous as the measurement is unknown, and whose definition of sufficiency will be used. The term "sustainability" is also stated in this plan. Even though it is economic sustainability, it will be interesting to see what the plan will bring about in the next four years. The question here, however, is, will the Thai economy and development in the shadow of the ADB be sustainable?
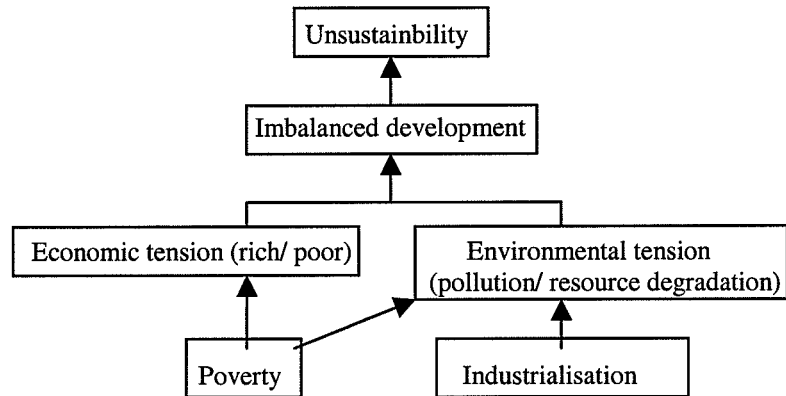
5.4 Sustainable Development: Does the policy support the rhetoric?

From the seventh plan in which the term "sustainable development" first appeared to the ninth plan in which "sustainability" is addressed, the definitions of these two terms have never been clearly defined. However, the sustainable development perspective of the Thai government is seen in these plans.

The development objective of the seventh plan was to balance the threefold of development: the economy; the humans; and the environmental. This objective is not different from the focal issue of the ninth plan, as it is stated that "in the ninth plan, the major emphasis is placed on balanced development of human, social, economic, and environmental resources" (NESDB 2002b). Furthermore, the notion of a long term development vision is addressed; that is, "Thailand's development vision for the next 20 years focuses on the alleviation of poverty and the upgrading of the quality of life for Thai people, so that sustainable development and well-being for all can be achieved" (ibid). The issue of "looking forward to the future" is addressed in this plan. However, as the eight previous plans never mentioned a long-term development strategy, and each plan lasts for only four years, it is doubtful whether this vision will be included in the next plan.

Although sustainable development is not defined, the ninth plan clearly views poverty as a constraint to sustainable development, as the plan claims that it aims to alleviate poverty so that sustainable development can be achieved. Other constraints are also addressed: "the widening income gap, ... and natural and environmental deterioration have contributed to increased social conflict and tension" (ibid). The issue of social conflict and tension is addressed; the economic tension between the rich in a growing urban area and the rural poor, and the tension between development and the environment. The latter is explained as industries in urban area having polluted the environment, and rural extensive agriculture having degraded natural resources. The plan proposes that these problems have resulted from imbalanced development. The analysis of the problems is summarised in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 NESDB's Problem Analysis

```
                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │  Unsustainbility │
                    └──────────────────┘
                             ▲
                             │
                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │ Imbalanced development│
                    └──────────────────────┘
                             ▲
                             │
         ┌───────────────────────────────────┐
         │                                   │
┌──────────────────────────┐     ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Economic tension (rich/ poor)│  │   Environmental tension       │
└──────────────────────────┘     │ (pollution/ resource degradation)│
         ▲                       └──────────────────────────────┘
         │                                   ▲
┌──────────────┐                     ┌──────────────────┐
│   Poverty    │─────────────▶       │ Industrialisation │
└──────────────┘                     └──────────────────┘
```

To solve the problem of unsustainability, or to attain the long term vision, Thai society must therefore be characterised by the concept of a **Strong and Balanced Society**, which is explained as:

> **Quality Society** connotes adhering to balanced development principles that will encourage and empower all people to be capable, ethical, responsible, public-minded, and self-reliant... The economy will be stable, strong and competitive resulting from policies supportive of balanced and sustainable development... The political governance system will be transparent, democratic, and accountable. Equality in Thai society will be substantially increased.
> **A Knowledge-based and Learning Society** will allow Thais to empower themselves through creative and rational thinking.
> **A United and Caring Society** is one in which the people uphold moral values, and adhere to Thai national identity characterised by values such as interdependency, caring and living in warm families within strong networking communities.
>
> (ibid)

From this concept, four development measurements are identified. These are: balanced economic development; quality of life; good governance; and poverty alleviation. The indicators of these measurements are seen in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Development Indicators

Measurements	Indicators
Balanced economic development	Sustainable economic growth with: • annual growth average rate of 4-5 per cent • annual account surplus of approximately 1-2 per cent of GDP • new employment of at least 230,000 jobs per year • inflation rate below 3 per cent • annual average growing rate of productivity of agricultural and industrial sectors are 0.5 and 2.5 per cent respectively • stable level of foreign exchange in order to create investor confidence
Quality of life	By the year 2006: • 100 per cent of Thai people achieve good health • 50 per cent of youth have at least 9 years basic education • maintaining a balanced demographic structure and appropriate family size • people participate in development • sustainable management of natural resource and the environment
Good governance	• A more efficient bureaucratic system • Decentralisation • People participation in local government
Poverty alleviation	By the year 2006: • Quality of life of low income groups is enhanced • Absolute poverty less than 12 per cent of total population

Source: Adapted from NESDB 2002b

Although development measurements and indicators are identified, the Thai government claims that development strategies need to be prioritised due to resource constraints (ibid). NESDB (2002b) argues that:

> In view of resource constraints, the efficient implementation of aforementioned Ninth Plan strategies needs to be based on priority being given to the following development areas:
> **(1) Stabilisation and rehabilitation of economic and social conditions to create conditions for more rapid economic recovery with stability...**
> **(2) Strengthening of grassroots economies...**
> **(3) Alleviation of social problems...**
> **(4) Poverty eradication...**

Whether or not the Thai government truly analyses the problems as stated in the document, it seems that the idea presented in the analysis is "imported" from the global one (see Chapter 3). That is, it gives emphasis to economic development, as can be seen in the NESDB's development priorities. Natural resource and environmental issues are not prioritised as an urgent policy.

5.5 Local Administration: A Delivery of the National Agenda

Thailand's administrative system has been controlled by the centralised power represented by the Ministry of Interior. Hewison (1993: 10) argues that:

> This large ministry has a hand in almost every important decision made in the country through its control of police and the provincial system of administration. In all provinces (except Bangkok) the Ministry appoints the Governor, appoints the head (nai amphur) of each of about 700 Districts, and approves the appointment of all Sub-District Chiefs and about 60,000 Village Heads… Thus the Interior Ministry sits at the apex of a huge administrative pyramid which stretches down virtually to the country.

This administrative system is implemented trough the "Department of Local Administration". The structure of the country's administration is summarised in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Thailand's Local Administration
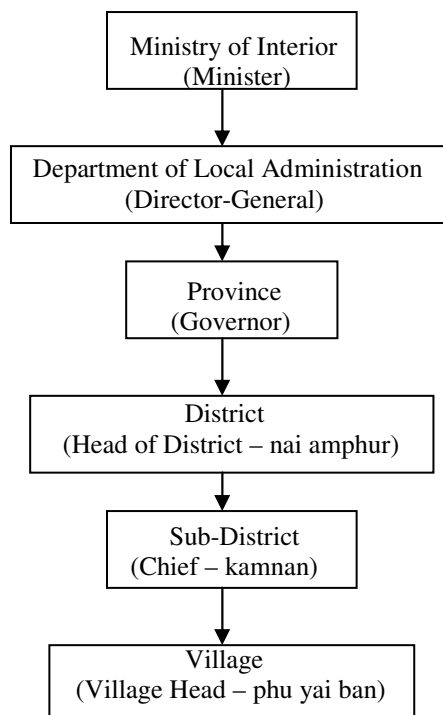
In terms of rural development, the development at the village level is controlled by national policies implemented through this bureaucratic commanding system.

> Development planning is highly centralised and operates in a top-down manner, seldom drawing on local experience, instead actively seeking to operationalise national plans. Implementing agencies are judged on their ability to be seen to be carrying out central policies

and by the completion of the planed activities and attaining targets. They are thus nodes in the administrative network…

<div align="right">(ibid: 10)</div>

However, there was a sign of political and social change led by academics, students, and the people's movement between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s. The first success of the movement against the centralised power was the campaign against Nam Choan Dam in the mid-1980s. It was a landmark in terms of successful social movement that has led to the formation of many other movements including women's, labour's, HIV infected people's, and so on. It also led to the establishment of the Assembly of the Poor, which is now the most significant people's movement in the country.

The central issue of all the movements is the quest for people's participation in decision making about the country's direction. The most significant event in terms of political change was the introduction of the "People's Constitution" in 1997. Traditionally, the Thai Constitution has been written by legal and political experts, with the approval of the King. However, the 1997 Constitution, as a result of the movements, was participatory. Representatives from interest groups took part in the formation process, and this is the reason for calling it the People's Constitution.

This constitution has resulted in many changes. One of those is change in the country's administrative system. With regard to the new Constitution, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) has initiated the "MOI's Vision for 1997-2006". Mr. Chanasak Yuvapurana, the Permanent Secretary for Interior by that time, stated that:

> Presently, the situation in Thailand is changing markedly and rapidly in terms of the economy, society, and politics. Examples of this can be seen in the announcement of the enactment of the new Constitution of the Thai Kingdom of Thailand (A. D. 1997), in the political reform process, in the economic downturn, and in the reform of the bureaucratic system, all of which will lead to further change in the future. Since the country's administration and development over a range of areas is the main function of the Ministry of Interior, it is necessary to adjust the organisation's direction and its capacity to cope with such change. In this regard, the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Interior has established

> **"MOI's vision for the next decade"**. Its objective is to be a **pointer for the working direction** of the Ministry of Interior and to serve as guidelines for improving the capability of organisations under its control, both for the central and provincial administration.
>
> <div align="right">(DOLA 1997b)</div>

The key issue in terms of local administration is decentralisation. Based on the new vision, it is stated in the document of the Department of Local Administration that "local administration organisations in all forms will be allowed greater liberty in determining policies, planning for administration, development, budget administration, and personnel administration through deregulation" (DOLA 1997a). This statement parallels with Section 196, Chapter IX of the 1997 Constitution, which stated that:

> The administration of local government created as local administration organisation shall be in accordance with the principle of self administration according to the will of the local people as the law provided.
> Local administration organisation under paragraph one shall be independence in determination of local administration policy and shall be independence in local taxation and monetary as the law provided.
>
> <div align="right">(The Council of State of Thailand 1997)</div>

Based on the concept of decentralisation, the new structure of the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Local Administration can be seen in Figure 5.3 on page 66.

Figure 5.3 The 1997 Local Administration Structure

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Ministry of Interior (MOI) │
                    └──────────────┬──────────────┘
                                   ↓
                ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
                │ Department of Local Administration (DOLA) │
                └──────────────────┬───────────────────┘
                                   ↓
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ DOLA Provincial Administration Office │
                    └──────┬──────────────────┬───────┘
                           ↓                  ↓
        ┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌───────────────────────────────┐
        │      Municipalities/       │   │ DOLA District Administration Office │
        │ Provincial Administrative  │   │                               │
        │      Organisations         │   │                               │
        └──────────┬───────────────┘   └──────────┬────────────────────┘
                   ↓ - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ┘            ↓
        ┌──────────────────────────┐           ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │        Subdistrict         │           │    Subdistricts/ Villages  │
        │ Administrative Organisations │         │                           │
        └──────────────────────────┘           └───────────────────────────┘
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Note: Line of supervision - - - - - - - →   Line of command ────────→
                                                 and co-ordination
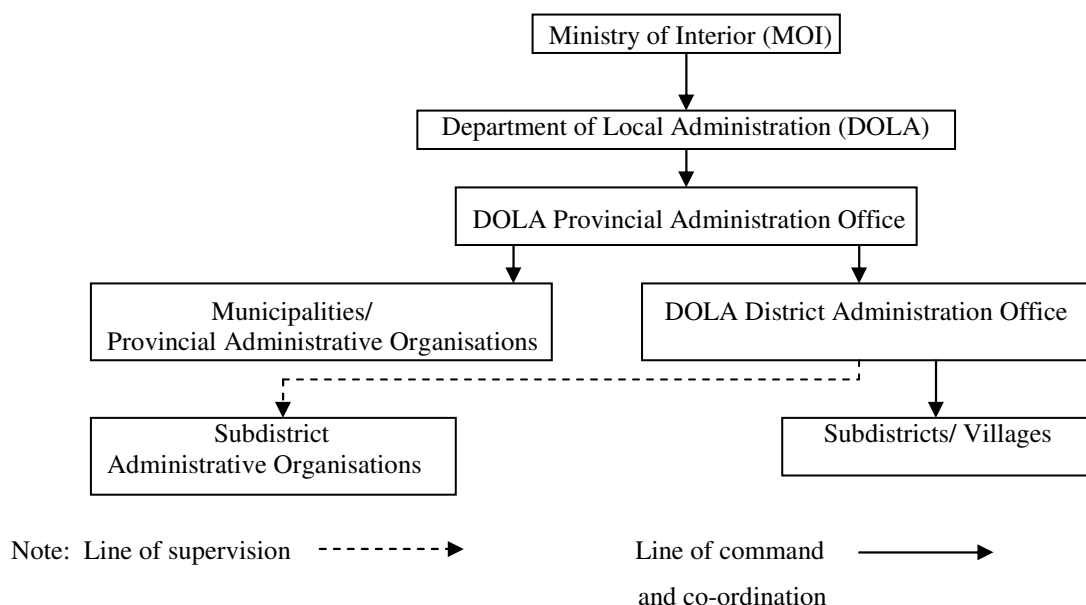
Source: DOLA 1997c

The significant change in terms of administration at grassroots level is the introduction of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO). Before 1997, subdistrict and village administration was done by subdistrict chiefs and village headmen, under command and control of the DOLA and the MOI. After the new constitution, the SAO has taken the administration role at subdistrict and village levels. Two persons are elected from each village to be the administrative committee members. Despite the existence of SAO, the DOLA keeps its control over rural communities through subdistrict chiefs and village headmen (see Figure 5.3). In many cases, SAO and the subdistrict chiefs are in conflict as they have different point of views regarding development policies and administration, and this kind of conflict has made local people confused. Furthermore, the DOLA allocates its officials at the SAO as administrative personnel. As a result, the officials and the SAO representatives are sometimes in conflict as the officials have to listen to the DOLA.

The SAO is somehow not autonomous because it has to follow the bureaucratic regulations. For example, its fiscal budget and the implementation of activities at subdistrict level are still monitored and evaluated by government officials through a bureaucratic system. Del Casino (2000) argues that the new administrative

policy is intended to decentralise power and allow local people to make independent decisions regarding rural development policies. However, the practices are "co-opted into older systems of authority and power. They… serve the government's bureaucrats who use these policies to promote their own political agenda… and increase the state's ability to manipulate (and gaze) into everyday village life" (ibid: 96).

Hence, despite the new system, power and control are still in the hands of the central government, and rural development is still dominated by national development policies, which gives emphasis to economic development. Local administration is thus merely a delivery of the national agenda and gives little real power to local people.

5.6 Summary

The Thai government views economic development as the means to bring about sustainable development; that is, economic development can reduce poverty by precipitating economic balance between the rich and the poor, and the urban and the rural. The issue of "balance" is also stated in the global concept of sustainable development – the balance between development and the environment, and between the rich and the poor. Thus it can be said that the national Thai and the global concepts of sustainable development share some characteristics in common. However, the solutions of resource scarcity and environmental problems are not clearly stated in the national Thai development plans.

The next chapter will discuss the interrelations of the global, the national Thai, and Mae Tha farmers' sustainable development discourses; that is, firstly, it discusses how and why global and grassroots' sustainable development discourses are different, and secondly the influence of the global discourse on the national Thai development agenda.

Chapter 6: Discourse Dialogue

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the global and Mae Tha farmers' sustainable development discourses. The chapter firstly reveals the basis on which these two discourses have been constructed. The concepts of supra-statism, sub-statism, economic globalisation, and Buddhist economics are introduced as frames for discussion. Secondly, the chapter presents how the global sustainable development discourse impacts on the national Thai development policy and how the national policy impacts on rural community development.

6.2 Problem of the Nation-State and the Rise of the Supra-Statism

The global discourse on sustainable development originated from Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" in which environmental problems resulting from chemical use in monoculture crop farming were addressed. The early concern regarding sustainable development, therefore, gave emphasis to the rectification of environmental problems. This can be seen from the first major global discussions on sustainable development – the UN Conference on Human Environment in 1972. This conference led to the formation of the "global / international institution" or "world government / governance", or what it might be called – the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP).

The establishment of the global environmental institution results from the idea that the Earth has no boundary, or it is transboundary. To rectify the problems, therefore, a unified global institution is needed. It also results from the fact that the individual nation-state cannot solve the problems, as it is argued that "although many… countries have written environmental protection policies into their constitutions and fundamental laws, enforcement is lax due to government competence and state commitments to high rates of economic growth" (Schubert, cited in Wapner 1995: 48).

The issue of interactions of economic growth and the environment has led to the notion of sustainable development – the balance between economic development and the environment (see Chapter 3). This issue was first stated in the Brundtland

Report (and has been discussed through to the Johannesburg Summit) in which the idea that "The Earth is one but the world is not" (WCED 1987: 29) was argued. This statement repeats the same ideology as addressed in the Stockholm Conference; that is, the Earth is transboundry. To rectify the Earth's problems the world has to be transboundary as well. To unify the world, then, world government is needed.

> The main argument supporting world government as a way to address global environment problems rest on the view that… states will continue to ignore the ecological limits of the planet and forego necessary actions in defending the earth from decay. In the present state-system there is little incentive for states to do otherwise. In fact, because we live in a competitive world – among individuals as well as states – there is an incentive to exploit resources.
>
> (ibid: 54)

Further up from "the Earth is one but the world is not", the Brundtland Report (1987: 29) argues that "we all depends on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Yet each community, each country, strives for survival and prosperity with little regard for its impact on others". This statement, again, repeats the transboundary ideology; that is everything on earth is interconnected and impacts each other. Paralleling with this ideology is the concept of (economic) globalisation – the world economy is also transboundary.

One of the situations that can give a picture of globalisation is a collapse of the Thai economy in 1997. Financial crisis in Thailand resulted in a closing down of many financial houses in the country, and, as Friedman (2000: xii) argues:

> these Thai investment houses were the first dominoes in what would prove to be the first global financial crisis of the new era of globalisation – the era that followed the Cold War. The Thai crisis triggered a general flight of capital out of virtually the Southeast Asian emerging markets, driving down the value of currency in South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia.

What can be seen from this situation is that the problem of one state has an impact on the other, or the other way round, the problem of one state results from the other's problem. Consequently a single nation-state cannot solve the problem on its own. This is what Waters (1995) called the "breakdown of the nation-state

system", and this breakdown "leaves an opening for political globalisation" (Waters 1995: 101).

> The crisis of the state contributes to the reflexivity of globalisation. This is because the excuses of politicians for their failures have taken on a global hue: our economy is failing because of the recession in the USA or Europe or Japan or somewhere else; our currency is declining because of the activities of unidentified international speculators; our air is dirty because of someone else has had a nuclear meltdown… Insofar as politicians deflect blame on to the global arena, collective political actors will focus their attention on that arena and the nation-state will progressively become an irrelevant.
>
> (ibid: 101)

Globalisation therefore implies that boundaries between nations can no longer exist as everything in the world, the economy and the environment in particular, are "interconnected". This ideology gives rise to the "supra-statism" on which he global sustainable development discourse has been constructed.

> According to the supra-statist argument, if a major obstacle to solving global problems is fragmentation of the units, then an obvious alternative would be to unify them – that is, to create a supra-state which can transcend the narrow aspirations of diverse states and promote a global one. The thought is to move up a political notch, to move from nation states to a single world state… (A) key problem with the state-system is that the individual state is too small a political unit to address global dilemmas…The construction of a world state could expand the scope of the predominant political unit on the planet and thus bring the political mechanisms of the world into line with the character of global problems.
>
> (Wapner 1995: 51)

The catchword of the supra-statism ideology frequently heard is "Think Global, Act Local". The locals are seen as the implementing mechanism of the global thinking. However, little consideration seems to have been given to local perspectives and the implementation has been based on global perspectives. This can be seen in the notion of sustainable development presented in Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans. That is, as the Thai government cannot solve the country's problems, which in fact result from the global force, both in terms of economic and social development (see Chapter 5), its development direction has thus been unified with the global thinking. The Thai government has eventually become part of the global discourse.

6.3 Perspective on Sustainable Development of Mae Tha People's Organisations

Opposite to the supra-statism is the "sub-statist" ideology. While the supra-statism perceives nation-states as too small to solve problems, sub-statism views it as too large because "the large social structures pervert human experience, and… large impersonal constructs diminish personal dignity and engender dependence. In other words, they are too big to be sensitive to human understanding and control" (Eckersley; Roszak, cited in Wapner 1995: 59). Sub-statist thinkers then suggest that "only a 'politics of person' can solve our ecological dilemmas: 'In seek to save our personhood, we assert the human scale. In asserting the human scale, we subvert the regime of bigness. In subverting bigness, we save the planet" (Roszak, quoted in Wapner 1995: 60).

This ideology parallels with Schumacher's book "Small is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people mattered" in which the concept of "Buddhist economics" or "economics of permanence" is discussed. Schumacher (1993: 42) argues that:

> For the modern economist…, he is used to measure the 'standard of living' by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man who consumes more is 'better off' than a man who consumes less. A Buddhist economist would consider this approach excessively irrational: since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to attain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption… The ownership and consumption of goods is a means to an end, and Buddhist economics is the systematic study of how to attain given ends with the minimum means.

These two concepts; the sub-statism, and Buddhist economics, reflect in Mae Tha farmers' perspective on sustainability and sustainable development. The former is seen in their interactions with the Thai state and policies, and the latter is seen in their sustainable development discourse. As discussed previously, the farmers perceive that the problem of unsustainability has resulted from government policies (see Chapter 4). Development direction of the Thai state is "too big" to understand the context of Mae Tha community and people. They have experienced failures and successes of development from their own practices within their own community through decades, and they have developed their sustainable

development discourse - having rice to eat and having land on which to stay, using sustainable means and controlled by "knowing when to stop, knowing what sufficiency means".

Despite sharing something in common with the sub-statism, Mae Tha farmers do not reject government existence. Rather, they acknowledge it and realise that they must work within government policy. They have thus formed the Mae Tha people's organisations. This can be regarded as a form of "government", and their attempt to be involved in the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (see Chapter 4). This attempt results from their view of power and control. They have realised that political power and control have impacts on their lives. Therefore, they need this control and power to be in their hands. This can be seen from their identified means to sustainability – control over agricultural production and food supply, land and natural resource management, and knowledge used in development processes. They view that people's organisations and networks are channels to challenge state political power, and to pursue political change, which will benefit them in terms of change in development policies, in turn.

6.4 Impacts of Global / National Thai Development Direction on Rural Community Development

Global institutions and the Thai government perceive economic development as a means to attaining sustainable development. The first priority of the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan is to stabilise the country's economy, and the second is to strengthen the grassroots economy. As major development indicator of the Thai state is GDP (see Chapter 5), it can be said that the goal of the country's development is "to have money". In the context of rural community development, the major policy responding to the "to have money" is the National Rural and Urban Community Fund Policy, known as the Village Fund.

This policy was initiated in 2001, the final year of the eighth plan, and has been brought to its practice in 2002. The practice is to set up a one-million-baht (NZ $50,000 equivalent) revolving fund for every village in the country. The aim of the fund is to generate and stimulate the economy at the grassroots level (Office of

National Fund for Rural and Urban Community 2001). That is, villagers can raise a loan from this fund in order to develop any projects regarding family and community economic development (ibid). The promotion and justification of this policy has been prepared since 2001. One of the campaigns promoting the fund was a television advertisement called "Money is Revolving". In the on-screen advertisement, one man raised a loan to initiate his enterprise. By doing that he created jobs for many people. These people then had money to buy food and necessities, which brought money to farmers who grew rice, vegetable, and fruits. Based on economic theory, this campaign suggested that the value of money would be added when it was used, and revolved from one place to another. It was a justification of the village fund.

The village fund policy also reflects the concept of a balanced economy (see Chapter 5). It has been argued from the eighth to the ninth national development plan that economic development in urban and rural areas are imbalanced. The village fund is thus a pathway to bring about economic balance between the rural and the urban, and between the rich and the poor. However, this policy has been broadly criticised. For example, Assavanonda (2001) argues that the village fund is just a political ploy to attract the public interest while no measures have been prepared for the implementation. Many have suspected that the fund will create rural debt rather than well-being (Gearing 2001; Sirithaveeporn and Arunmas 2001). It is also a top-down policy implemented through the local administration channel of the Ministry of Interior.

Money is not a new indicator of development. It was the main indicator of development under the modernisation paradigm. However, as can be seen from Mae Tha farmers' experience, modernisation has created many social and environmental problems. It can also be said that the development goal to have money has created dependency. As global and national Thai concepts of sustainable development share the same characteristics with the modernisation, it can be assumed that global and national sustainable development discourses would create social and environmental problems and lead to dependency of grassroots people.

6.5 Summary

Global and Mae Tha farmers' sustainable development discourses are different because they have been defined by different discourse communities. The Global discourse has been defined initially by development professionals and "the world leaders" (see Chapter 3: Stockholm Conference) who had environmental concerns, then lately by the world leaders and the "major groups" who viewed the interactions of economic development and the environment as the major issue. The Mae Tha discourse has been defined by grassroots farmers who have experienced failures and successes of development projects and policies for decades.

In the context of grassroots development, the difference between the two discourses would not be a problem if nation-states can respond to their grassroots' perspectives. However, as shown in the national Thai development policies, the state corresponds to the global discourse, and this has not benefited rural development in the case of the Mae Tha farmers. This contradiction results from the fact that individual nation-states are not autonomous in terms of defining their own development goal as they are unified into the global force. The issue of autonomy therefore needs to be considered. The next chapter is a discussion about the implications of the global and Mae Tha farmers' dialogue on sustainable development for rural development, as well as a presentation of the dissertation summary and conclusions.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the dissertation, with regard to its four objectives: to examine how the concept of sustainable development has been defined at the global level; to examine how grassroots people of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand view and define the concept; to compare global dialogue with the grassroots' perspective, and to examine how the Thai government positions itself on this dialogue. It also discusses the implications of this dialogue for grassroots development.

7.2 Summary of the Dissertation

The global sustainable development discourse comprises two sub-discourses; the Earth and Equity. It argues that sustainability on Earth will be attained when equity between human beings and the environment, and between developed and developing countries, take place. Equity between developed and developing countries lies in equity in people's well-being resulting from equal opportunity to pursue economic development. In the context of developing countries, economic development is also seen as the instrument to rectify environmental problems. This is because in developing countries where people are poor, natural resources are destroyed in order to bring about the poor's livelihoods. Economic development, then, is regarded as the means to attain global sustainability.

The global discourse has been constructed on the fact (perceived by international development and environmental professionals) that nation-states can no longer rectify environmental problems as the environment, or the Earth, is transboundary. Global institutions are needed in this regard. Furthermore, in terms of the economy in the light of the globalisation, every nation's economy is interconnected. Economic problems in one country impacts on other countries. The economy has also no boundary. The ideology of transboundary, both of the economy and the environment, therefore gives the right to global institutions to define the concept of sustainable development. As a result, the dominating paradigm of sustainable development is economic development.

Grassroots farmers of Mae Tha community in northern Thailand have their own concept of sustainability and sustainable development. They simply define sustainability as having rice to eat and having land on which to stay. However, the farmers have experienced developmental problems brought to the community by the outsider, namely government development policies that have had a verse impacts on their lives. They thus consider that in order to attain sustainability, they have to have control over their development direction.

The issue of having rice and having land corresponds directly with agricultural production and land management. Sustainable development thus requires grassroots' control over agricultural production and food supply, land and forest management, and knowledge used in development processes. The grassroots people need to have control; power to negotiate with and challenge the state development direction, and to pursue policy change. They consider that this power will be gained through strengthening people's organisations and networks. This can be seen from the works of Mae Tha Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives, and the Community Forest Committee. Although they view power and control as the means to attain sustainability, they however view that this power needs to be controlled by the concept of "knowing when to stop, knowing what sufficiency means". The perspective on sustainability and sustainable development of Mae Tha farmers results from their experience through decades.

Situated in different contexts, global and grassroots' sustainable development discourses are therefore different. This difference will not cause any problems in terms of rural development if the Thai government, an institution standing between grassroots and global development directions, can serve the needs of grassroots people. Unfortunately, the Thai state cannot ignore the flow of the global economy, and thus has adopted global ideology to be the country's development direction. This is not appropriate for rural development in the Mae Tha context. From the experience of Mae Tha people, the influence of the global discourse on development direction of the Thai state cannot bring about rural sustainability. Rather, it causes dependency.

7.3 Implications for Grassroots Development

7.3.1 In the Thai Context

Mae Tha farmers view that sustainability will take place when local communities are politically autonomous. This point of view also corresponds to the concept of decentralisation of power suggested by the sub-statism. The Thai government has also addressed this issue in the National Economic and Social Development Plan. However, it has not yet practically translated into action (see Chapter 5). Local governments in rural Thailand are still dominated by central power and bureaucratic system. To be sustainable in rural development context, therefore, a "genuine" decentralisation of power is in need. However, as Mae Tha farmers have suggested, power will be also gained through people's organisations processes and networks. Therefore, decentralisation, as well as strengthened people's organisations, are the very keys to attain sustainability at rural level.

7.3.2 In a Broader View

As a case study research, this dissertation attempts to explore Mae Tha farmers' concept of sustainability and sustainable development, and explain how it is situated in Mae Tha context. Grassroots people of other communities who have different experience from that of Mae Tha farmers may have a different perspective. In terms of the dialogue on sustainable development discourse, sustainable development in the sense of Mae Tha farmers, however, reveals that the concept cannot be generalised in the name of global, or even national, development. This dissertation therefore suggests that case study research on sustainable development discourse of different grassroots communities is worth pursuing as it could initiate a change in the development direction of countries where each community is located, or even challenge the global discourse in the future.

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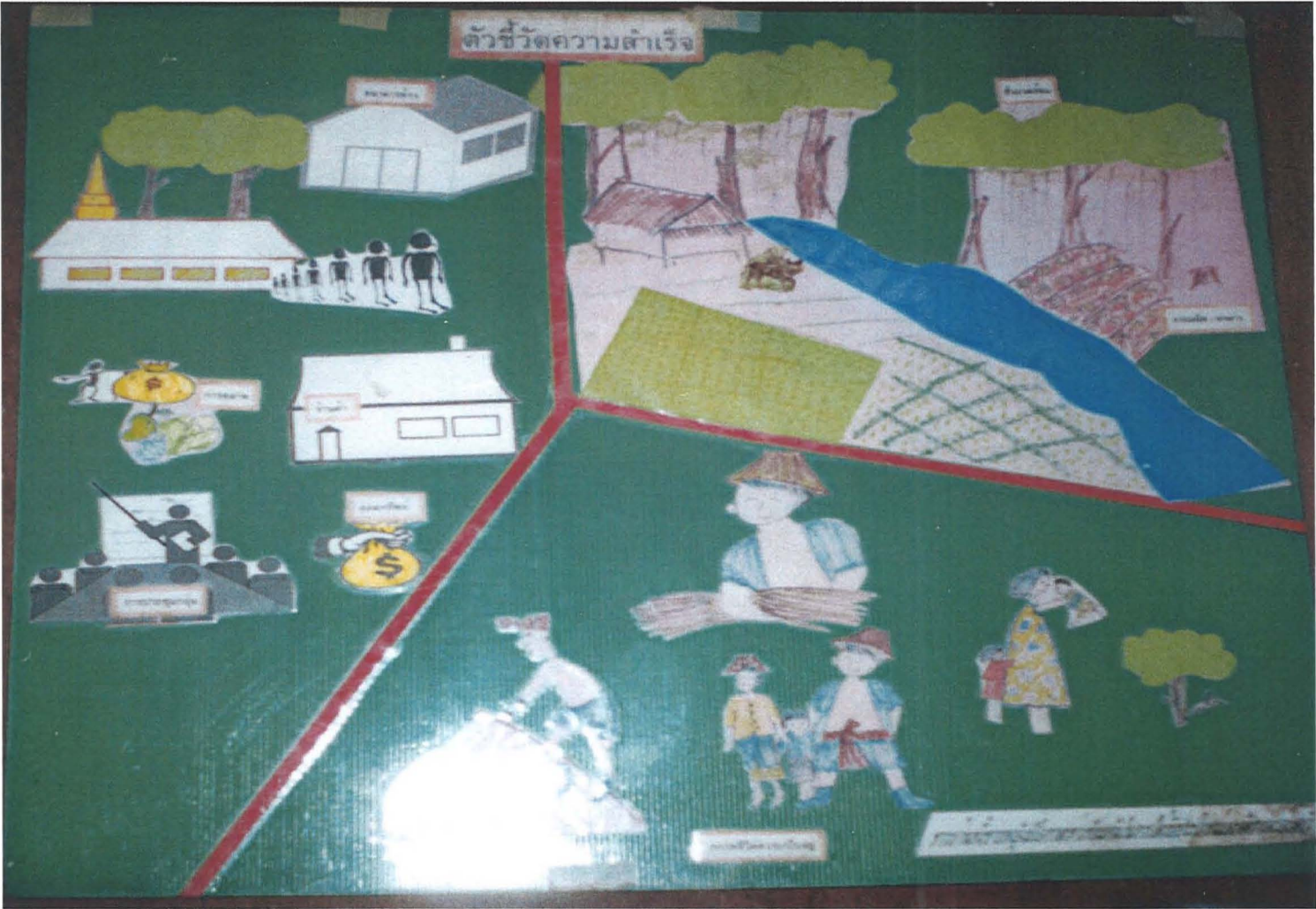
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: View of Mae Tha Community

Appendix 2: Structure of Organic Farmers' Network

Appendix 3: Mae Tha People's Organisations' Indicators of Achievement

Appendix 4: Categories of Community Groups