

## **Environmental Social Movements in Thailand: How Important is Class?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper argues that current academic approaches to environmentalism in developing countries understate the role of class in either dominating political alliances, or in constructing underlying environmental discourse. The paper uses examples of various social movements in Thailand to illustrate the diverse ways in which environmental activism may represent or support different political objectives. It is proposed that analysts need to pay more attention to the origin of much environmental discourse from new, or identity-based social movements both within Thailand and elsewhere, and to seek ways to understand the ‘co-production’ of social activism and environmental knowledge.

### **Introduction**

This paper argues for a more critical understanding of the role of class in environmental social movements in developing countries. Like Goh (see accompanying paper in this volume), I argue that environmentalism in Southeast Asia cannot be dismissed as simply the pastime of urban élite. But unlike Goh, I also argue that environmentalism reflects many assumptions and constructions of knowledge that can only be interpreted with reference to social and economic class. The influence of class is not just in the different abilities of classes to mobilize political resources, but also in the construction of environmental discourse itself. As a result, even apparently successful environmentalism in developing countries can be a divisive rather than a unifying force in civil society.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section reviews historic debates on social movements and class, and argues that academics have often inferred models of social movement evolution base on the so-called ‘new social movements’ of Europe and North America to developing countries without acknowledging the differences between societies. The second section then discusses the ‘co-production’ – or cognitive praxis – of environmental knowledge and social movements with the aim of illustrating that environmentalism in developing countries may not be based upon the representation of ‘local’ environmental values and knowledge, but instead the globalization of environmental discourse from elsewhere.

The third section presents, illustrates and expands these debates by presenting information concerning environmental social movements from Thailand. Thailand is a fitting case study because it is industrializing rapidly, and has also experienced a rapid growth in environmental activism and concern from both domestic and international campaigns. The paper classifies environmental social movements into three broad categories of ‘green’ environmental concerns (wildlife, forestry, wilderness, etc.); ‘brown’ issues (industrial and urban pollution); and the growing discourse of ‘red-green’ environmental concern, which emphasizes poverty-reduction and social development as environmental priorities.

The paper concludes by discussing the implications of Thailand’s experiences for general debates about the role of class in environmentalism. The paper’s key argument is that environmentalism must not be portrayed automatically as a unifying, progressive force in society. Instead, environmentalism is a new arena for deeper political conflicts, in which the concepts of

'environment' and 'environmental problems' are constructed to assist alternative political viewpoints, and which consequently have associated winners and losers.

## **Social Movements and the Importance of Class**

Academic approaches to environmentalism in developing countries are increasingly adopting two assumptions that understate the role of class or other social divisions. First, many writers argue that environmentalism is a progressive and inclusionary political force that assists the growth of civil society. Phil Hirsch (1997:179), for example, wrote concerning Thailand:

The environmental movement in Thailand has become a significant force in recent years... The movement has drawn in a wide range of social, economic and political actors in Thai society, yet it has also maintained its role as a significant challenge to dominant patterns of development and vested interests embodied in the *status quo*. In this respect, environmentalism represents an opposition force, but one that has, ironically, been *increasingly inclusive* (his emphasis).

Secondly, other writers have argued that environmental problems are increasingly global in nature, and correspondingly implied that they pose an equal threat to all sectors of society. Ulrich Beck (1992:39) demonstrates this well in the discussion of so-called 'Risk Society' as a new stage of societal development:

With the globalization of risks a social dynamic is set in motion, which can no longer be composed of and understood in class categories.

This paper proposes different approaches to both statements. In particular, it argues that the tendency to portray developing world environmentalism as either progressively inclusive or opposed to uniform, 'global' risks results from an uncritical application of models of social movements from Europe and North America. Instead, it is necessary to consider the relative stage of societal development in developing countries, and the impacts of environmental activism itself on the production of environmental knowledge.

Conventionally, academic approaches to social movements are commonly divided into four main theoretical groupings: collective behavior theory; resource mobilization theory; new social movements; and action-identity approaches (e.g. Morris and Mueller 1992). Collective behavior theories – such as proposed by Talcott Parson and others – are among the earliest approaches, and refer to macro-systemic or structural explanations of societal change, in which social movements occur as responses to large-scale malfunctioning or disbalance of society. Social movements, or 'collective behavior', occur as a weak form of revolutionary outbreak, commonly as the result of social changes such as industrialization or urbanization.

Resource mobilization theories are more recent and still widely adopted as frameworks of explanation. Social movements are seen as an inherent and optimistic aspect of the political process, in which the respective success of different movements – or campaigns – is a result of different innovatory tactics and mobilization of support achieved. Political alliances between different political organizations or activists may therefore increase the chances of successful social movements (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993).

'New social movements' approaches treat social movements as both symptoms of, and solutions to, the contradictions inherent in modern bureaucratic society. In contrast to 'old' social movements based on industrial class divisions and the mobilization of material interests, 'new' social movements are expressions of new social identities emerging in the tension between increasing state regulation of society, and the emerging human autonomies experienced within postindustrial societies. According to Habermas (1981:34), new social movements 'no longer arise in the areas of material reproduction; they are no longer channeled through parties and organizations... Rather, the new conflicts arise in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization'. 'Action-identity' movements are generally similar because they occur as a result of opposition to impositions of dominating social systems and norms. Unlike 'new' social movements, action-identity conflicts can be explicitly more class based, yet with a fundamentally different pattern of class relations and class conflicts associated with the dominant technocracy of postindustrial society (Tourraine 1981).

'New' social movements and 'action-identity' movements are therefore similar in being cultural and popular opposition to dominating social norms or bureaucracy that suppress social identity at a time when social groupings in postindustrial society are becoming significantly more complex than indicated simply by categories such as 'working' and 'middle' class. Consequently, many new social movements have also been associated with identity politics such as feminist, racial, environmental and gay-rights movements. Yet despite the argument of Tourraine, that action-identity movements represent a more sophisticated form of class activism, there is still debate concerning whether social classes should be analyzed as an agent of change, or as a structure within which activism takes place. Giddens (1973), for example, proposed that the 'new' middle class of postindustrial societies is 'class-aware' but not 'class-conscious'. Offe (1985:833) similarly wrote,

'New middle class politics, in contrast to most working class politics, as well as old middle class politics, is typically a politics *of* a class but not *on behalf of* a class' (his emphasis).

Academics have consequently linked the nature of social movements with proposed levels of societal development. 'Old' social movements of industrial societies are (in theory) linked with material conflicts between working classes and the owners of the means of production. 'New' social movements, alternatively, are associated with a greater diversification of social identity under postindustrial society, and a disbalance between desired forms of civil society and the existing political and social orders. It may therefore be inappropriate to transfer explanations of social movements based on postindustrial societies to developing countries which arguably contain aspects of both industrial and postindustrial society, on account of the rapid industrialization experienced and the growth in educated domestic élite who activate on more identity-based principles. The growing discourse of 'risk society' and 'risk movements' (Halfmann 1999) also propose the transition towards yet another stage of society. But it is still unclear how such discourse is applicable to societies at different stages of development, or how far the type of activism might co-produce the environmental assumptions underpinning the concepts of risk society.

## **The Co-production of Environmental Knowledge and Activism**

Co-production may be defined as the mutual evolution of social activities with knowledge and discourse. A crucial tenet of co-production is that knowledge is constructed deliberately or unconsciously to reflect and legitimize the social activities (Jasanoff 1990). The term, 'co-production' is similar to the concept of 'cognitive praxis' developed in relation to social movements by Eyerman and Jamison (1991).

To date, many conventional approaches to environmental activism have automatically assumed that scientific knowledge is non-negotiable, and that environmentalism will lead to a greater democracy. Taylor (1995) for example, argues that local ecological resistance movements in developing countries are leading to a more equitable form of local democracy and environmental management. In international politics, environmental social movements and organizations are associated with a 'global' civil society (Lipshutz 1996), or a growing political mobilization on behalf of environment. Princen *et al* (1994:226), for example, wrote that 'NGOs are increasingly prominent forces in framing environmental issues. They help establish a common language and, sometimes, common worldviews.'

Yet an increasing number of studies now question how far environmental movements in developing countries may succeed in effective local representation. First, it is generally accepted that the historic impetus for so-called environmentalism came originally from social groups that valued wilderness as beautiful, and that this trend in Europe and North America was linked to rises in industrialization and urbanization (Nash 1982). In developing countries some have argued this effect may be seen by the preference for 'green' environmental agendas (such as forestry) over 'brown' agendas (such as pollution) because of the rise of urban élite. Such shaping of policy may also be influenced by the alliances of the élite with industrialists who resist environmental regulation and international organizations seeking to advance green agendas (Satterthwaite 1997).

Furthermore, the type of social movements themselves may also influence the construction of 'nature' and the perceived threat to environment. The word 'nature' has undergone transitions since it was first discussed by Marcuse and others during the 1960s in relation to new and action-identity social movements (Castree 1995). Under these initial debates, oppressive economic and social systems were seen to suppress human 'nature' or vitality. Yet within the space of a few years, social

movements and discussions of nature were referring to the destruction of wilderness and resources under similarly oppressive social and economic systems. The emergence of new social movements relating to environmentalism, therefore, implies a postindustrial concern at environment defined as wilderness or as threatened by oppressive systems – rather than as may be defined by alternative science or societies.

The influence of such social framings of environmental perception has been noted in research on the construction of environmental degradation in developing countries. Similar to work in laboratories that have indicated the social construction of supposedly value-free science (e.g. Latour and Woolgar 1986), research on some crisis-driven models of environmental degradation in developing countries such as desertification, deforestation and soil erosion have also demonstrated social and political influences. In particular, such models have been shown to overlook biophysical causes of environmental change beyond human influence, plus the abilities of local populations either to value environment differently or adopt measures that protect resources. Together, these oversights make many such environmental crisis models an extension of the perceived ecological crisis with late-modern or postindustrial societies of Europe and North America rather than a biophysically accurate model of environmental change, or a valuable aid to local development (Leach and Mearns 1996; Batterbury *et al.* 1997).

Consequently, there is increasing evidence that the environmental norms developed under new social movements in Europe and North America have co-produced environmental science in a way that may not be applicable or representative of other societies worldwide. Academic researchers and particular activist groups may also add to this process by reflecting framings and value judgments in collecting information, and in influencing the direction of policy or activism. For example, Covey (1995) demonstrated that alliances between middle class NGOs and grassroots organizations in the Philippines became dominated by NGO concerns, and consequently led to an avoidance of poverty-related aspects of environmental policy. Postcolonial theorists have similarly argued that the imposition of western or élitist conceptions of nature have romanticized environmentalism in developing countries, and led to an avoidance of pressing issues of poverty and empowerment necessary to improve livelihoods of poor people. Jackson (1997), for example, rejected essentialist discourses of ecofeminism in India on the grounds that they spoke more of élitist or middle class conceptions of what environment or developing societies should be, rather than the immediate realities of what poor, Indian women might define for themselves.

Hajer (1995) and others have described this co-production of environmental activism and knowledge in terms of ‘discourse coalitions’, or the emergence of discursively negotiated ‘facts’ or convenient points of agreement between different actors. Under this framework, environmental concerns are in effect ‘epiphenomena’, or short-term subject matters of debate that form an arena for the political conflicts between deeper and often longer-term divides between different sectors of society, states or economic actors. As a result, dominating discourses of environment may emerge haphazardly through the development of time and space-specific ‘storylines’ within different societies, which may then be disseminated elsewhere through their representation as neutral science, or through the wishes of particular activists.

One optimistic proposal for resolving dominating discourses in favor of under-represented groups has been the concept of ‘Liberation Ecologies’ (Peet and Watts 1996). Under this framework, social movements may act as both a form of resource mobilization and discursive democracy by challenging dominating environmental discourses and resulting in a more localized and institutionally strong form of environmental governance. Yet critics have questioned how far ‘Liberation Ecologies’ may actually communicate all diverse voices in localities, rather than replicate global orthodoxies, or address environmental risks such as industrial poisoning in which there may be little long-term indigenous knowledge relating to the cause of risk (Forsyth 1999a). Furthermore, ‘Liberation Ecologies’ does little to acknowledge how far environmentalism may be a current symptom of deeper societal conflicts such as those relating to class differences.

This paper now assesses such debates in relation to environmental social movements in Thailand. The paper divides social movements into categories of ‘green’, ‘brown’ and ‘red-green’ conflicts, in order to indicate the role of class in shaping both resource mobilization and the co-production of environmental knowledge. For the sake of brevity, the paper considers both industrial working classes and peasantry as disadvantaged groups without discussing obvious differences either between the categories, or within them on the basis of divisions such as gender. Furthermore, only environmental conflicts since the 1980s are discussed.

The information presented was collected from a number of detailed interviews and participant observation of environmentalism in Thailand. In addition, the paper uses an exhaustive survey of

newspaper framings of environmental conflicts from *The Bangkok Post*. It is acknowledged that using this English-language newspaper might of course reflect a western-focused or élitist perception of environmentalism. Yet editors of *The Bangkok Post* insist that the newspaper is mainly for Thai readers. Furthermore, Thai-language newspapers do not provide the same level of day-to-day news coverage of environmental issues. Information from *The Bangkok Post* is therefore presented as a useful guide to the construction of environmental discourse, but with the acknowledgement that it is by no means the only guide, and that its own style of coverage is unlikely to have remained constant throughout the survey period.

## **Social movements in Thailand**

### **(i) The ‘green’ agenda**

Before the 1980s, overtly ‘environmental’ concern in Thailand was virtually totally restricted to the activities of urban groups such as the Society for the Conservation of National Treasures and Environment and bird-watching organizations which focused on the appreciation of ancient ruins, wildlife and wilderness. Such groups were composed mainly of urban, educated citizens, including charismatic leaders such as Dr. Boonsong Legakul, the President of the Association for Wildlife Conservation of Thailand. The earliest overt forms of ‘environmentalism’ in Thailand, therefore, were almost exclusively ‘green’ concerns of damage to forest and wildlife, and the earliest environmental organizations were created to reflect these concerns.

During the 1970s, environmentalism began to be a more significant public force particularly in relation to opposition to the construction of a cable car to the summit of the Buddhist shrine at the mountain of Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai. The campaign, which began in 1969, and then restarted in 1985, indicated the concern of local residents against the possible damage to the shrine and mountain. More significant political impacts were felt in 1988, however, after public activism led to the cancellation of the proposed Nam Choan dam in the forests of Kanjanaburi province, and a related campaign to ban logging finally led to its agreement and eventual ratification in 1989. The activism coincided with the election of Thailand’s first democratic government in 1988 (beyond previous short-term experiments). Some analysts have argued that environmentalism has always been inherently linked with democratization, by demonstrating the importance of natural resources to small communities, or by providing a means to activate for democratization during periods when more overt activism would have been suppressed by military governments (e.g. Hirsch 1997).

The main concern of the ‘green’ environmental agenda in Thailand is almost certainly deforestation. Thailand has had one of the world’s fastest deforestation rates, and Royal Forestry Department statistics indicate that forest cover has declined from 50 percent in the 1930s to just 20 percent in the 1990s. Environmental concern since the 1980s has therefore focused closely on forest conservation, and has been enacted in a variety of debates including the effectiveness of the Forestry Department in enforcing the logging ban, the alleged corruption of politicians involved in logging or unregulated plantations as a cover for logging, and the problem of preventing forest encroachment by shifting cultivators in northern Thailand, or by landless peasants in northeastern Thailand. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review all environmental conflicts exhaustively, but it is worth noting that environmental activism on ‘green’ concerns has often experienced conflict between middle class conservationists and peasant farmers. Most notably, debates since the mid-1990s on community forestry have commonly pitched conservationist groups – who wish to minimize access of people to protected forests – against human rights and development activists – who seek to allow villagers various degrees of access to forests. In certain debates, such as Chom Thong in northern Thailand, where lowland farmers and conservationists criticize upland ‘hill tribe’ farmers for watershed degradation, the opposition to forest conservation against social development is most clearly seen. However, such conflicts commonly form an opportunity for the discussion of deep-seated social differences, and the superficial subject matter of environmental debate may hide a variety of discourse coalitions from different political actors in Thailand. Indeed, the science describing the biophysical impacts of upland agriculture is itself contested (Forsyth 1999b).

Table 1 indicates the numbers of middle class and working class (including peasantry) actors per environmental story in *The Bangkok Post* for a variety of environmental themes. Newspaper ‘stories’ are defined as any newspaper news report or feature on an environmental theme, and ‘actors’ are defined as individual citizens or organizations that are mentioned within the story with some significance for either the source of news, or as commentators on events. The same numbers for stories

relating to 'women's rights' (as defined by *The Bangkok Post* library) are included as a comparison with another 'new' social movement.

[Table 1 around here]

The figures in table 1 indicate that – as expected of 'new' or identity social movements – the number of middle class actors per story for women's liberation is 1.26 compared with just 0.50 for working class (including peasant) actors. For all green agenda stories surveyed, the equivalent numbers are 0.56 middle class to 0.42 working class or peasantry. This ratio may be surprisingly equal for a 'new' social movement, yet compares with figures of 0.14 middle class and 0.59 working class actors for 'brown' environmental issues. This imbalance between figures for 'green' versus 'brown' environmental issues suggests a lack of involvement of the middle class in activism associated with industrial pollution. Yet despite the relatively high representation of peasant / working class actors in 'green' environmental stories, few environmental conflicts relating to forestry or wilderness conservation have actually been settled in their favor. This finding suggests either a desire on behalf of *The Bangkok Post* to represent poorer classes as victims or losers of environmental conflicts, or the attempt – consciously or otherwise – to report peasant or working class actors as supporting 'green' environmental concern.

### **(ii) The 'brown' agenda**

The 'brown' environmental agenda refers to incidents of urban and industrial pollution, commonly affecting poorer communities near industrial centers. In Thailand, the first well-known incident of environmentalism relating to 'brown' concerns was the opposition to the construction of a tantalum processing plant in the coastal resort of Phuket in 1986. This incident, however, is not specifically related to brown concerns as it also threatened tourism income and the physical beauty of a location already considered by many to be beautiful.

Brown environmental disputes have since grown more numerous. Isolated incidences of industrial poisoning within factories were recorded for years as industrialization grew, as well as occasions of inadequate treatment of toxic waste. In 1992, concern grew at the pollution coming from the lignite-burning power station at Mae Moh in northern Thailand, and then concerning pollution of the Nam Phong River in northeastern Thailand from the Phoenix pulp and paper plant. In these cases, scientific evidence for resolving the extent and origin of pollution became a source of political conflict, particularly as these were used for the basis of claims for financial compensation. In 1994, an estimated 14 factory workers died at the northern region industrial estates in Lamphun allegedly because of industrial poisoning. Scientific evidence accordingly became the source of political conflict, and interactions between activists, state and industry resulted in much attention being attributed to either AIDS or lead poisoning as the cause of deaths, although the more likely possibility of solvent poisoning was not as widely acknowledged (Forsyth 1999a).

Table 1 shows some examples of environmental conflicts involving brown concerns. General topics of pollution all indicate that there are more references to 'working' rather than 'middle' class actors, yet the working class actors referred to in the text were generally presented as victims of industrial progress and hazards rather than as activists. Indeed, *The Bangkok Post* referred more commonly to 'experts' from government agencies than activists from environmental movements (although these numbers are not shown in Table 1). The distribution of numbers suggests that 'brown' environmental issues are framed as the domain of expert bodies outside public participation or mainstream environmentalism. It is also worth noting that environmental conflicts concerning industrial pollution have yet to produce significant environmental victories such as Nam Choan or the logging ban.

### **(iii) 'Red-green' environmentalism**

'Red-green' environmentalism may be described as environmental conflicts involving topics of the 'green' agenda, though in which the crucial theme of debate is poverty or human vulnerability to environmental change. Examples of 'red-green' environmental debates in Thailand include the construction of dams in regions where farming communities, but not forests, are threatened, or where reforestation schemes imply the loss of farmland or village settlements. Examples of these in Thailand include the construction and campaign against the Pak Mul dam in the easternmost point of the

country; and the enforced resettlement of villagers in Pa Kham district of Buri Ram province, northeastern Thailand, during the early 1990s. In such cases, poor people are portrayed as being the victims of development or of an invasive state. Yet it is not always clear whether environmentalism is considered to be invasive or not. In Pak Mul, for example, the dam has generally been presented as an ecological disaster because of the dynamiting of rapids during its construction, and the subsequent impact of migratory fisheries and stagnation of water. Yet in Buri Ram and more recently in Dong Larn in northeastern Thailand, attempts by villagers to resist reforestation and enforced resettlement have alternatively been portrayed as either the attempts of the poor to resist a bullying state, or as 'squatters' standing in the way of progress. Few media reports have actually questioned the need for framing of reforestation as a tool of environmental policy.

Yet despite this rigidity concerning reforestation, perhaps the most interesting aspects of Thai 'red-green' environmentalism are the efforts currently being employed by activists to construct an alternative to mainstream 'green' environmental discourse. Occasionally this has meant the construction of new discourse coalitions with other aspects of Thai culture and development. During the evolution of the Chom Thong dispute in the 1980s, for example, environmentalists used Buddhism to add legitimacy to their campaign. Indeed, the main conservationist NGO, the Dhamanaat Foundation, may be translated literally as 'the Buddhist way', and one of the main local leaders in favor of forest conservation was the eminent monk Phra Pongsak. In Pa Kham, however, another monk, Phra Pachak, was instrumental in opposing attempts of the state to evict villagers from land scheduled for reforestation. Later writings by journalists such as *The Bangkok Post's* Sanitsuda Ekichai have since started debates about the role of Buddhism in defining a new form of ecology relevant for Thailand, based upon the access of resources to society, and the shunning of restrictive legislation. (It is also worth noting that both Phra Pongsak and Phra Pachak were the targets of personal and vindictive campaigns to reduce their status as spiritual leaders and therefore their power to support each campaign).

The most recent example of this red-green debate is in the proposed community forestry bill, which aims to define the terms in which forest areas may be open for use by society. Under the logging ban of 1989, no logging was allowed, yet it soon became apparent this was largely unenforceable, and also penalized many villages that depend on forests, or the rotational clearing of forestland for forest products and agriculture. Conservationists, on the other hand, fear community forestry may open up forests to uncontrolled encroachment, and an abandonment of the progress made in the 1980s. The proportion of 'middle' versus 'working' class actors in relation to community forestry stories are 0.33 to 0.55, among the most equal ratios of all environmental stories surveyed. The ratio suggests that community forestry is of equal relevance to peasant groups as middle-class activists. An alternative interpretation is that the discursive framing of community forestry is still being established. It is clear, however, that most political groups acting on behalf of the poor wish to achieve increased access to forest areas than currently proposed. Yet the environmental framing of forest conservation still seems skewed towards the 'green' agenda and the apparent assumption above that reforestation and forest conservation must necessarily be in favor of all social groups. The result of this current political debate will be important and trend setting for future framing of environmentalism in Thailand.

## Conclusion

This paper has assessed the relationship of social and economic class and environmental social movements by referring to the experience of Thailand. The paper's key conclusion is that current forms of environmental discourse are inherently reflective of values and framings of environmentalism characteristic of the new social movements and identity politics of postindustrial Europe and North America. Although environmental social movements in Thailand may apparently be (in Offe's phrase) 'of a class, not on behalf of a class', the discourses of environmentalism have been adopted and used by different actors to support political objectives. In certain cases, it would seem that environmentalism from overtly 'green' movements has supported aims relevant to urban élite and the middle class and resulted in policy proposals that do not reflect the immediate needs of peasants or factory workers. The most obvious examples of these divergences are in approaches to community forestry that propose the exclusion of people from forests, or discussions of pollution that place higher significance on embarrassing the state rather than identifying hard solutions to current and real health threats.

There are several implications of these experiences for wider debates about environmental social movements and class. Firstly, it seems clear that environmentalism should not be portrayed automatically as a progressive and uniformly beneficial political force for all society. Instead,

environmentalism is a discourse that appears to have the political legitimacy of value-free science, yet actually hides a variety of normative judgments and historical developments that may not be generally agreed or universally applicable. Indeed, it seems that the origin of environmentalism within the framework of new social movements and action-identity movements of Europe and North America during the 1960s has significant implications for the framings of environmental debate and the kinds of knowledge produced. Indeed, analysis of the different actors in newspaper reports of environmental conflicts indicate that those classified as 'green' contain significantly more actors who may be described as middle class than stories involving industrial pollution.

Secondly, it is also clear that analysts need to be more aware of how activists and organizations involved in social movements may either produce environmental knowledge or influence environmental discourse to support their political objectives. Awareness of co-production is necessary in order to avoid the portrayal of environmental discourse as scientifically neutral and non-political. Evidence from Thailand suggests that there are currently major discourse coalitions between a wider variety of actors to support the adoption of widespread reforestation as a convenient solution to a variety of environmental problems. Reforestation is supported by the state at large as a means to rebuild forest resources and regain control over land historically owned by the state - by the military as a means to regain control over land that is strategically important, by separate governmental departments such as the Royal Forestry Department and Royal Irrigation Department in order to strengthen each of their departmental objectives, by the urban élite in order to restore wildlife and wilderness, by international campaigners to restore the perceived crisis of tropical deforestation and by international investors in climate change mitigation who see reforestation as a relatively cheap way to sequester carbon emissions. The result is a tendency for discourse in Thailand to represent reforestation as an axiomatic element of environmental policy, when in fact certain groups will lose from it, and many of reforestation's supposed benefits on erosion, water shortages and climate change have been widely questioned (Forsyth 1999b). Instead, there needs to be greater attention to how and for whom such apparent consensus is constructed, and a more critical examination of particular environmental policy options. For example, the term 'reforestation' needs to be discussed in more detail between, say, complex rehabilitation of ecosystems in specifically protected areas, and simple teak or pine plantations in zones where villages have existed for decades.

This paper, then, has challenged the two common assumptions that environmental social movements in developing countries are socially inclusive, and opposed to environmental risks that are global and non-negotiable in nature. Instead, environmentalism contains, within it, the essence of social division based upon the appropriation of environmental discourse for particular political objectives, and the less obvious inherited framings and construction of knowledge associated with (modern) environmentalism's origins in 1960s Europe and North America. Although it is clearly simplistic to assert environmentalism in Thailand represents a classic conflict between different economic classes, the discourse of environmentalism still reflects its postindustrial origins, and its practice has generally only succeeded for objectives defined for the élite or middle class rather than by factory workers or peasants.

Further debate about the hidden biases in environmentalism may assist in developing new, more inclusive forms of environmental politics. Current debates within Thailand about 'red-green' environmentalism that focus on redefining current orthodoxies in favor of local communities and grassroots development may also remove some of the more repressive elements of environmental policy. Yet perhaps the most important step is to demystify environmentalism as an automatically urgent, progressive social force supported by uncontested scientific credibility, and instead to acknowledge it as a constructed and politicized discourse. Environmental protection is indeed necessary and urgent in countries undergoing rapid industrialization. But not acknowledging environmentalism's haphazard evolution within different societies nationally and internationally may only serve to heighten rather than reduce developmental problems.

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News Events	Dates of news coverage surveyed	Total number of stories	Total column inches	Average column inches per story	Average middle class actors per story	Average working class actors per story
Women's Liberation movement	Mar 88 - Mar 99	222	12417	55.93	1.26	0.50
Total Green (non weighted)		<b>1902</b>	<b>40032</b>	<b>21.85</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>0.42</b>
Total Brown (non weighted)		<b>1057</b>	<b>21440</b>	<b>20.79</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.59</b>

### EXAMPLES OF GREEN AGENDA

Nam Choan (dam in forest area)	Apr 82 - Feb 98	147	2827	19.23	1.20	0.07
Pak Mul (dam in non-forest area)	Apr 89 - Jul 98	251	5443	21.69	0.52	0.91
Logging, including the campaign for the ban	Jan 88 - Dec 91	607	11025	18.16	0.20	0.22
Suan Kittl, (alleged corrupt politician involved in logging)	Jan 90 - Dec 90	63	1526	24.22	0.06	0.10
Tha Chana (alleged corrupt politician involved in logging)	Jan 96 - Sep 98	79	1691	21.41	0.10	0.13
Community Forestry, including the eviction of farmers from Dong Larn, northeastern Thailand	Jan 96 - Mar 99	242	5998	24.79	0.33	0.55
Chom Thong (conflicts between lowland farmers and upland 'hill tribe' farmers in northern Thailand)	Dec 96 - Jun 98	20	610	30.50	0.50	1.55
Pa Kham, Buri Ram (Eviction of farmers from forest land)	Jun 89 - Feb 95	48	1040	21.67	1.02	0.90

### EXAMPLES OF BROWN AGENDA

General pollution	Jun 88 - Feb 99	276	6747	24.45	0.28	0.26
Air pollution	Jan 93 - Feb 99	207	4046	19.55	0.05	0.37
Water pollution	Apr 92 - Mar 99	236	3800	16.10	0.04	0.27
Phoenix river (pollution of river)	Apr 93 - Aug 98	35	618	17.66	0.46	0.86
Rayong, Map Ta Phut (industrial pollution)	Mar 94 - Feb 99	84	1441	17.15	0.10	1.07
Mae Moh (power station pollution)	Oct 92 - Mar 99	86	1335	15.42	0.01	0.91
Lamphun (industrial poisoning)	Feb 94 - Oct 96	33	1058	32.06	0.03	0.85

**Table 1: Number of class actors per environmental story as recorded in *The Bangkok Post***

(Classifications of each story come from those used in *The Bangkok Post* library)