TO SEE THINGS FROM THE OTHER END

Rural development through the lens of local youth in the context of urbanization
The case of Tambon Pang Tawai, Amphoe Pang Sila Tong, Kampaeng Phet, Thailand

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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Thesis supervisor: Anne Whiston Spirn
Title: Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning

Abstract

The global phenomenon of rural-urban migration presents a great number of challenges, especially for cities in developing countries like Bangkok. While there is an urgency for cities to better accommodate their marginalized emigrant population, not many planners look into rural areas where migration actually begins. Specific to Thailand, most of the migrating population from country to city are in the working age. With the exodus of this population new problems begin to emerge in rural towns which include a lack of care for elders and parental care for children. Furthermore, the brain drain phenomenon also diminishes life and economic vibrancy in rural areas. At the same time, those who migrate into cities are often at risk of being marginalized. In many parts of Thailand, where amenities such as roads, education, and healthcare, have already been provided, migration continues despite some people's preferences to live back in rural areas.

Tambon Pang Tawai, Amphoe Pang Sila Tong, Kampaeng Phet, Thailand serves as a case study of a typical rural town with low density, most of whose population work on farms. Furthermore, its proximity to the Mae Wong National Forest also presents an interesting relationship between the rural lifestyle and the natural environment. Thus, the development process of Tambon Pang Tawai has the potential become a model for many other rural towns with similar contexts.

By using photography and participatory workshops as tools to engage youth and glean insights from their perspectives, this research found ways in which rural areas in Thailand can be improved and sustain themselves socially, economically, and environmentally. Additionally, the methodology of this research can also contribute to a cross-disciplinary framework of education and community development.

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Anne –I cannot thank you enough for introducing me to this field of inquiry which brings together my passion for photography, social studies, and planning. This combination is deeply embedded within this research and has taught me to become an explorer of the beauty of life and an observer of the invisible. Jim, I thank you for your input, your kindness, and your support; they always helped me think more deeply about my research. Garnette, your notion that writing is an act full of design and possibilities has tremendously helped unlock my writing for this research, thank you.

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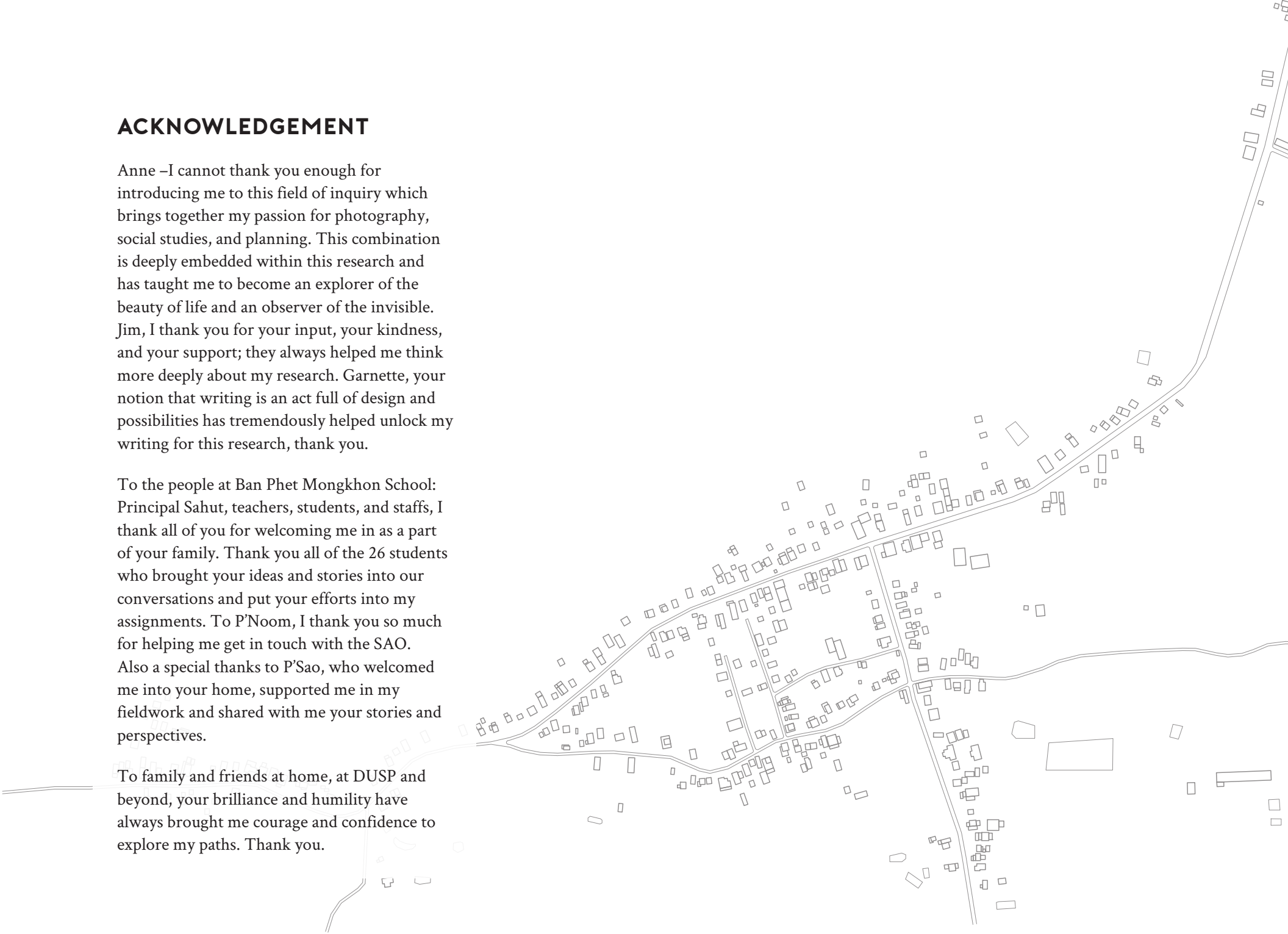
To family and friends at home, at DUSP and beyond, your brilliance and humility have always brought me courage and confidence to explore my paths. Thank you.



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PART I
TO SEE THINGS FROM MY END

I was the type of outsider that romanticized the rural life,

The life that is surrounded by
fields of gold, hills of green, and infinite sky of blue;

Where people and animals live side by side;

Where clusters of houses form villages;

Where nature shapes life, and life shapes agriculture;

Where orchards and plantations and fields and farms

grow and yield the things I see in supermarkets.

But as space and time are governed by changing seasons,

That is sometimes too dry, and sometimes too wet,

People try to survive under whatever weather they get.

So in reverse, agriculture shapes life, and life shapes nature.

And when farms require investment, and debt creeps into life,

Each crop of investment is a risk that is left to fate to decide.

And so some people believe and pray and hope

That there is more to life than this place they have already known.

And so they travel near,

And they travel far

To look for vitality and opportunities in larger towns,

and for the things they need and the things they want

Knowing that their families

and their friends await their return.

Knowing that they can always come home.

PART II
TO SEE THINGS FROM THE OTHER END

INTRODUCTION

[To] understand rural poverty better, and to judge better what to do, outsiders, of whatever persuasion, have to see things from the other end.

Robert Chambers, 1984, p. 46

I am an outsider, a city person. I was born and raised in Bangkok, a city with a registered population of 8.28 million according to the 2010 census (World Population Review, October 20, 2017) competing with another unregistered population of 2.37 million according to a 2015 report (NSO, 2015). Over time, I have also witnessed a change in population density, diversity, and complexity within the city. It is normal to witness a significant population fluctuation during large national holidays as people go home to celebrate with their families. It is normal to get in a taxi and to find that the driver has come from a distant village. In my neighborhood of around one hundred households alone, many people come from many other provinces of Thailand and other neighboring countries such as Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

In 2013, I started teaching undocumented Cambodian migrant youths, who came from Poi Pet, a rural town on the border between Thailand and Cambodia. They slept during the day and woke up at night to sell flowers and shine shoes in a red light district of Bangkok to help support their families back home. In 2014, while I was researching on education gaps, I interviewed two youths who decided to drop out from their schools in rural towns and come to Bangkok to be with their working parents. The list of my personal experiences continues. While many rural migrants in Bangkok engage in low-skill jobs, many of my university friends, who came from other provinces of Thailand, are doing well in the city.

This urbanization trend is not a unique phenomenon in Bangkok alone, but in many other cities around the world. Undeniably, cities are often viewed as places of opportunities, but they also have a great number of challenges. The urbanization trend and national economic concentration in urban areas urge governments and planners to focus their efforts and resources in addressing complex issues within cities. Similarly, Bangkok and other major provinces in Thailand are trying to adapt themselves to improve their ability to accommodate marginalized emigrant populations. While there is an urgency to such efforts, not many planners look into rural areas where migration actually begins. Consequently, I became interested in understanding rural development in the context of rural-urban migration and urbanization.

Since the late twentieth century, the world has witnessed significant growth in global population as well as a strong bias towards urban areas, especially in many developing countries. As these countries with limited resources focused much of their efforts on building and enhancing their industrialized cities, they consequently often neglected their rural population in far provinces (Todaro, 1981, p. ix-xiv). With such bias at the time, many development scholars such as Philip H.

Coombs, and Manzoor Ahmed, Michael P. Todaro, and Robert Chambers became alarmed by the stark disparity in rural areas. While poverty largely contributes to the deprivation of rural population, Chambers (1984, p. 112) also points out to other facets including physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness.

In Thailand, rural development has also been addressed mainly through the lens of poverty alleviation. In the mid-1970s, the poverty rate in Thailand spanned from 12 percent in the Central Region (excluding Bangkok) to 25 percent in the South (Richard P. and World Bank quoted in Useem, M., Setti, & Kanchanabucha, K. 1988). Consequently, in 1982 the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) recognized that past development plans focusing on infrastructure development alone could not empower rural population to overcome poverty. Thus, in alignment with recommendations to address other facets of deprivation, the Poverty Alleviation Plan (PAP) was initiated under section 6 of the 5th National Development Plan for 1982-1986 by the NESDB (1982). The PAP introduced five new development strategies: 1) prioritization of areas with concentrated poverty, 2) meeting basic needs, 3) creating self-reliance, 4) promotion of techniques that can be implemented locally and require minimum financing, and 5) encouraging local solutions (NESDB, 1982). Since then, the continual efforts to ameliorate rural poverty by various actors have helped reduce the country's poverty rate from 42 percent in 2000 to 9 percent in 2016 (NESDB, 2016). By the current 12th National Development Plan for 2017-2021 (NESDB, 2017), issues around rural poverty have been replaced with new challenges including the growing inequality and inequity.

Despite the reduction of rural poverty as well as the provision of basic amenities and infrastructures, which were once thought of as main push factors towards rural-urban migration, urbanization in Thailand has continued to burgeon from 21 percent in 1970 to 52 percent in 2016. This trend also reflects the global urbanization phenomenon with more than half of the global population living in urban areas since 2007 (UN DESA, 2008). Bangkok alone, as the country's capital city, is housing at least 10.65 million people or 16 percent of the nation's population (World Population Review, October 20, 2017, and NSO, 2015).

The opposite directions between the rate of urbanization and the rate of poverty can also be seen as an indirect correlation. A research done under the International Organization for Migration or IOM (2005) suggests that rural-urban migration is the type of migration where migrants and nations can reap the most economic benefit. Deshingkar (2006) further posits that rural-urban migration is playing a role in trickling down economic benefits to rural population by means of remittance and growth of the national economy especially in sectors that rely on low-skill labors.

However, as is often recognized, economic growth does not always constitute well-being. Migration has adverse implications in rural areas as existing social institutions and

structures are often ruptured (IOM, 2005). One of such institutions is family. Specific to Thailand, youth at the age of 15-24 contributes to the highest percentage (33 percent) of migrant population nation-wide, with 27 percent from the 25-34 age group and another 27 percent from the 35-59 age group (NSO, 2014). Overall this means that most of the migrating population are in the working age. At a household level, a problem that emerges from this migration trend is a lack of care for elders left in rural areas (Adhikari, Jampaklay & Chamratrithirong, 2011). Furthermore, there is also a lack of parental care for children who are often left behind. The generation gap at a household level also affects child development as grandparents often cannot keep up with the rapid change in technology and knowledge. On the other hand, adult migrants who move into urban areas also risk being marginalized. Additionally, children who are brought along to urban areas often risk emotional, physical, or sexual abuses (Jirapramukpitak et al., 2011). Consequently, the loom of these social issues, which impact younger generations, has the potential to yield economic loss and hinder economic development in the long run. Furthermore, the exodus of this young population can also contribute to a brain drain phenomenon and a lack of vibrancy in rural areas, which are important elements for social and economic sustainability of rural towns.

In alignment with the age of migrants in Thailand, provision of basic education at a sub-district (tambon) level also largely contributes to students' decision to migrate. The Thai Compulsory Education Law 2002 mandates every child to receive education from grade 1-9. The entailment of this law means that the government needs to provide education at those levels no matter how far the communities are. Consequently, youth are likely to live in their hometown until they graduate from ninth grade or around 15 years old which is also the same age as the beginning of the migration trend.

As migration continues to be a challenging feat for many and also adversely impacts the rural population, I became curious if there is anything else other than poverty, which may have contributed to push or pull people from rural to urban areas. In a reflection of Durkheim's delineation of individual sensations and collective representations (1976 cited in Ingold, 2000, p. 158), this trend can be looked at through individual perceptions to understand better the collective factors which drive their decisions to migrate.

Thus, I became interested in understanding the perception of teenagers at the age of 13-15 who still live in their hometown, study in their local schools, and will soon have to make their decision to stay put or migrate. Explicitly, this research asks "How do teenagers in rural areas of Thailand perceive their hometown in relation to their decisions to stay put or migrate to other towns or cities?" Furthermore, in the context of rural-urban migration, this research wants to better understand how rural areas in Thailand can improve and sustain themselves socially, economically, and environmentally. Thus, it also asks the following sub-questions:

- Do negative perceptions of rural towns contribute to pushing their population out of rural areas?

- Do positive perceptions of rural towns contribute to pulling their population to stay put?

- What are the key aspects that will contribute to youths' decisions to stay, if they can redirect the future of their hometowns?

To answer these questions, I chose various participatory methods as local engagement has been proven time and again to be more effective in planning efforts and longevity of the development processes (Chambers, 1984; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Dalal-Clayton, Dent, & Dubois, 2003; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Chapman, 2011). As such, this research was conducted through a series of workshops with teenagers. To attract youth as well as portray perceptions of place, I decided to use photography as the primary tool to elicit stories and conversations around opportunities and challenges within the area. Furthermore, the act of photographing also urges students to explore more thoroughly and look more deliberately at their community as well. Other tools including reflection writing and discussion also help portray local perceptions and capture significant characteristics of rural space and livelihood.

In implementing this research, I picked Tambon Pang Tawai, Amphoe Pang Sila Tong, Kampaeng Phet, Thailand as a case study due to three reasons. First, to reach out to local youths, I was able to partner with Ban Phet Mongkhon School, a public school responsible for youths in three out of eleven villages within the tambon, to conduct the workshop series with their students between the age of 13-15 years old. Secondly, this tambon's characteristics fall under the type of rural areas which this research aims to study. Tambon Pang Tawai spans over 62 sq.km. in its residential and farm area, but only 8,351 people are living in it. The tambon's population density amounts to 23,108 sq.m. of land per person. Furthermore, the majority of the population here also works on farmlands, and small businesses, which can be said is typical to what we often perceive as being rural. Lastly, in addition to the residential and farm area, another 448 sq.km. of Tambon Pang Tawai is under the Mae Wong National Forest Reserve, which is known to have one of the healthiest ecosystems in Thailand. Thus, the development of Tambon Pang Tawai, which need to integrate natural environment alongside economic and social sustainability, has the potential become a model for many other rural towns with proximity to the natural environment.

This research has four chapters which are laid out in alignment with my experience as an outsider going into a new place and the progression of the workshop series. The first chapter, Description of Place, is an informative chapter filled with facts and figures to help provide a contextual background of Tambon Pang Tawai. The second chapter, Perception of Place, shifts the perspective and talks about how local youths see their own communities—opportunities and challenges—in relations to their lives and life decisions. This chapter focuses on the workshop series, which encouraged youths to observe and think about their community from different angles. The third chapter, Policy Recommendation, is a portrait of youths' answers to the question

of how they wish to see their communities develop in the future. Youths' answers also contributed to answering my research questions which came out by the end of the workshop series. Lastly, the fourth chapter, Policy Comparison, takes a look at how local policies align or not align with youths' proposals so that challenges can be more effectively addressed and opportunities enhanced.

Main research question

How do teenagers in rural areas of Thailand perceive their hometown in relation to their decisions to stay put or migrate to other towns or cities?

Sub-questions

1. Do negative perceptions of rural towns contribute to pushing their population out of rural areas?
2. Do positive perceptions of rural towns contribute to pulling their population to stay put?
3. What are the key aspects that will contribute to youths' decisions to stay, if they can redirect the future of their hometowns?

Important note

Before moving into the chapters, however, there are a couple of things, which are global references throughout the research.

- All photographs presented in this research were taken by me unless stated otherwise. In many cases, I will be pairing my photographs with students' written work. In such cases, I will only credit students' written pieces and not the photos. However, sometimes I will use students' photos that directly link to the conversations or the written descriptions. In such cases, I will then reference both the photographs and the written pieces accordingly.

- All of the conversations, written work, and documents were in Thai. The translation to English was done by me.

- For cases of currency translation, I will be using the rate of 32 Thai Baht per 1 US Dollar, which is a rounded up rate at the time when the research took place.

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE

This chapter aims to help paint a broad brush with facts and figures of the location in which this research takes place. Much of the information in this chapter is derived from the 2016 annual report by the Sub-District Administration Office (SAO) of Tambon Pang Tawai, interviews with different stakeholders, and my direct experience living in the area. The spatial scope of the research links most directly to teachers and students at Ban Phet Mongkhon School, which is bounded by two key factors: 1) jurisdictive responsibility and 2) people's everyday activities that connect beyond the first factor.

Spatial jurisdictive division in Thailand ties in closely with various levels of governance, civil services, and politicians. As summarized in Table 1-1, the nation of Thailand is divided into provinces, which are then further divided into districts called amphoes, sub-districts called tambons, and villages called moobans or moos or bans in short. Ban Phet Mongkhon School is one of the six schools within Tambon Pang Tawai, Amphoe Pang Sila Tong, Kampaengphet (Pang Tawai SAO, 2016). The location of this tambon is shown in Figure 1-1. For Ban Phet Mongkhon School, in particular, it is responsible for youths in three surrounding villages: Ban Phet Mongkhon (Moo 9), Ban Phet Charoen (Moo 3), and Ban Wong Kao Tong (Moo 11), the locations of which are shown in Figure 1-2 and Figure 1-3. Out of the 26 participants of the research workshop sixteen students live in Moo 3, six live in Moo 9, one lives in Moo 11, and the three other students do not live in these three villages but have joined this school due to their personal reasons (see details of participants in Appendix A.)

On the contrary as shown in Figure 1-2, people's livelihoods are not bounded by these districts, but rather by distance and commuting time to other accommodating spaces and facilities such as banks, cooperatives, gas stations, bus stations, pharmacies, markets, restaurants, coffee shops, and others. In general, people tend to go no further than a 15-20-minute drive from their villages, which can be translated into a distance of no more than 20 kilometers. The 20-kilometer distance*, however, is not in all directions. People often only go in directions that lead to larger towns with more services and activities. The two main towns that people often visit within this distance are Klong Lan and Pang Sila Tong.

Within this chapter the description of place will be divided into five sections namely: 1) geography, 2) demography, 3) accessibility and connectivity, 4) public services, and 5) jobs and economy.

Table 1-1: Spatial heirachy terms and names

English (Thai)	*Research locations*
Nation (Prated)	Thailand
Province (Changwat)	Kampaengphet
District (Amphoe)	Pang Sila Tong
Sub-district (Tambon)	Pang Tawai
Village (Mooban)	Phet Charoen Phet Mongkhon Wong Kao Tong

* The direct translation of time and distance is consistent at all times because there is no traffic congestion in the area.

Figure 1-1: Map of the research site location

Source of the country shapefile: www.gadm.org, version 2.8, November 2015, founded in http://www.savgis.org/HPAI/thaibound/thbound.html, retrieved May 2017.
Source of village shapefile: drawn by author as referenced from the map provided by the Pang Tawai SAO

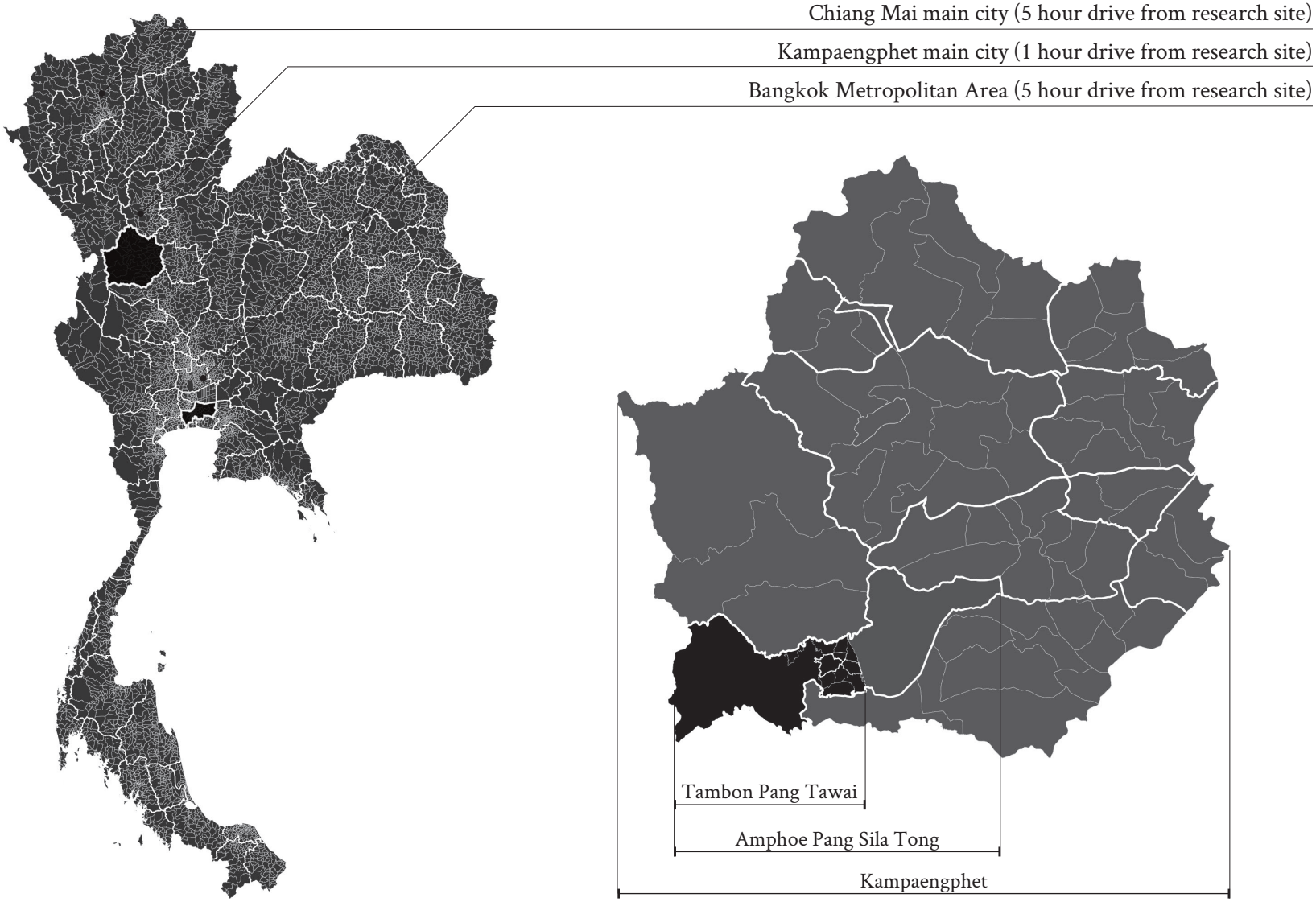


Figure 1-2: Community network map as compared to jurisdiction map

Source of tambon shapefile: www.gadm.org, version 2.8, November 2015, founded in http://www.savgis.org/HPAI/thaibound/thbound.html, retrieved May 2017.
Source of village shapefile: drawn by author as referenced from the map provided by the Pang Tawai SAO
Source of community shapefile: drawn by author

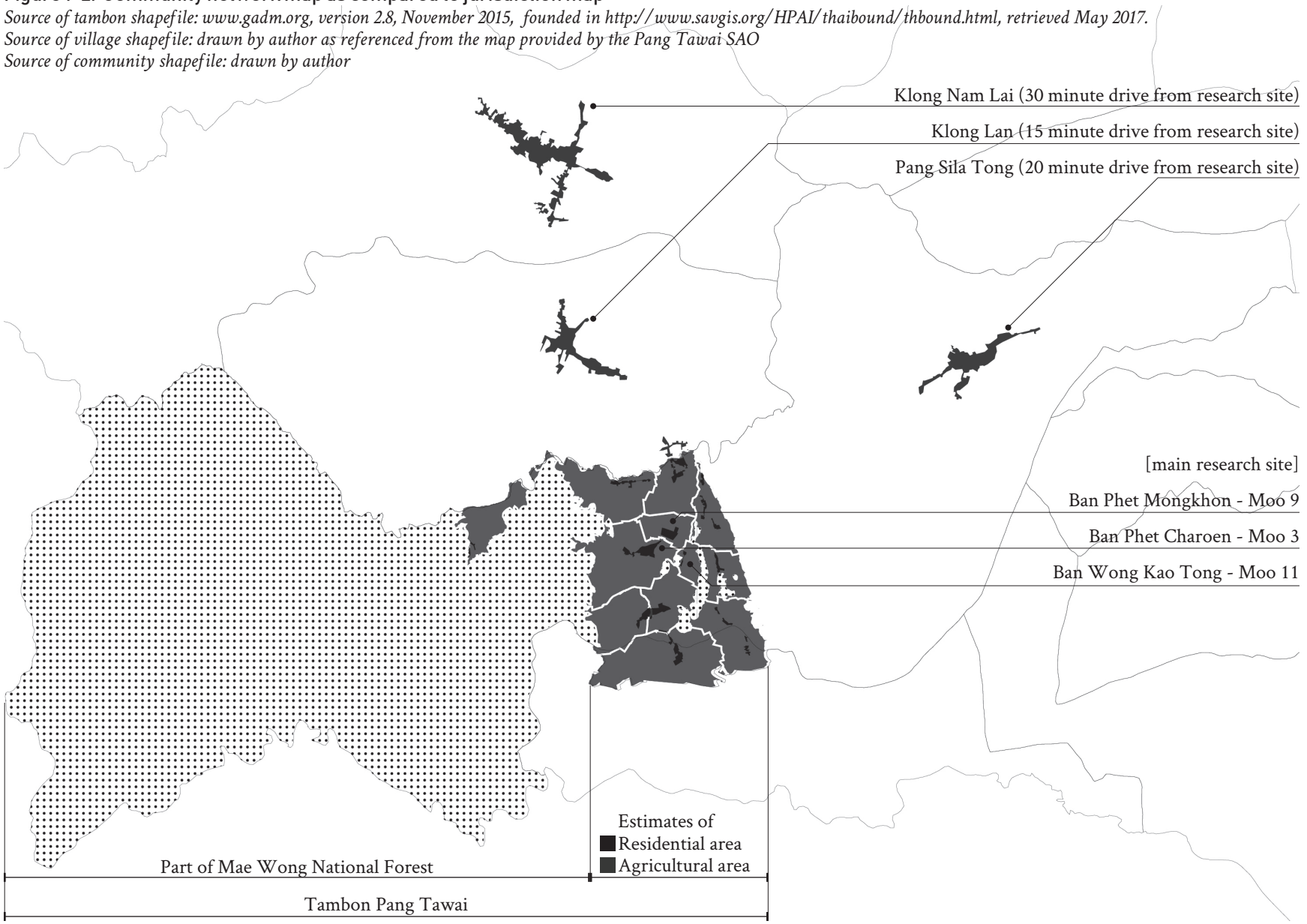


Figure 1-3: Map of villages within Tambon Pang Tawai

Source of village shapefile: drawn by author as referenced from the map provided by the Pang Tawai SAO
Source of community shapefile: drawn by author

Figure 1-4: Map of communities in the main research site
Source of village shapefile: drawn by author

Table 1-2: Land use in Tambon Pang Tawai
Source: Pang Tawai SAO, 2016.

Types of Land Use	*Area (sq.km.)*	*Perc.*
National forest reserve	440.76	86.48%
Community forest	6.76	1.33%
Agricultural land	54.07	10.61%
Residential land	8.10	1.59%
Total area	509.69	100.00%

Table 1-3: Water volume and survey response in water adequacy in different villages
Source: Surveys of water resources for household and agricultural usage, 2017, and Pang Tawai SAO, 2016.

Mooban	*Max. capacity (cu.m.)*	*Current volume (cu.m.)*	*Per household (cu.m.)*	*Adequacy for household*	*Adequacy for agriculture*
1 - Prai Sawan	105,749	88,865	317.38	Yes	No
2 - Klong Leuk	137,130	108,200	474.56	No	No
3 - Phet Charoen	214,439	178,020	473.46	No	No
4 - Pang Tawai	219,807	171,995	815.14	Yes	Yes
5 - Tak Fah	235,102	197,837	557.29	No	No
6 - Pang Nue	181,593	166,715	597.54	No	No
7 - Klong Pla Soi	32,994	27,770	155.14	No	No
8 - Pang Malako	83,427	69,973	322.45	No	Yes
9 - Phet Mongkhon	122,273	102,028	607.31	No	No
10 - Pang Mai Pattana	75,472	62,987	287.61	No	Yes
11 - Wong Kao Tong	145,884	123,161	680.44	No	Yes

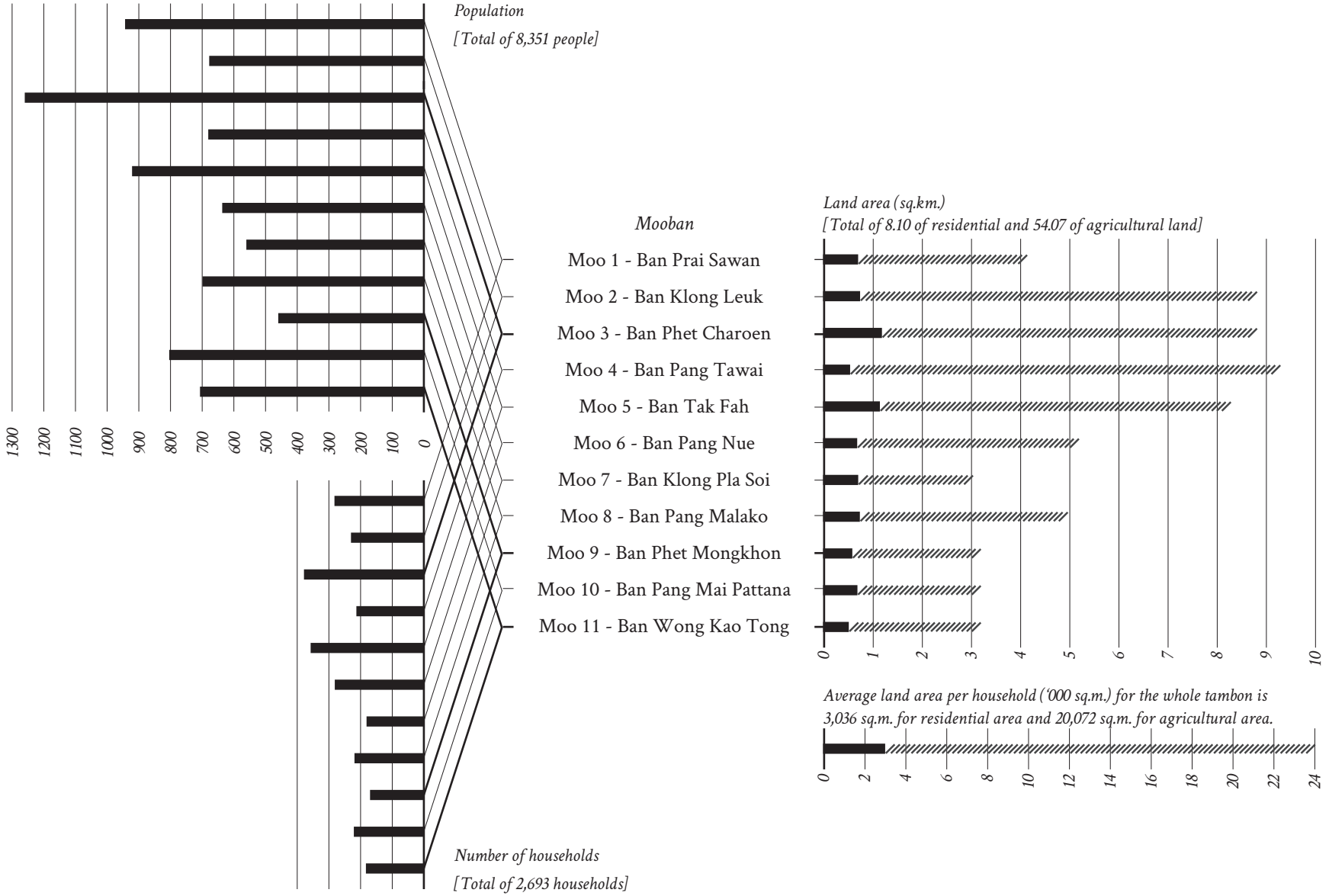
Geography

Within the total area of 509.69 sq.km. in Tambon Pang Tawai, only 12% or 62.17 sq.km. is agricultural and residential land while the rest 88% or 447.52 sq.km. is a part of the larger Mae Wong National Forest area. The distribution of land use is shown in Table 1-2. Most of the forest areas are part of the mountain range that separates Thailand and Myanmar, which situates in the western part of Tambon Pang Tawai. The mountain range in Thai is named Tanon Tong Chai, but it is named Dao Na in Burmese. The restricted forest area, however, is called Mae Wong National Forest, which is a locally more well-known name.

Two seasonal monsoon winds influence the macro climate in Thailand: the southwest monsoon during mid-May to mid-October, which carries humidity from the sea creating the rainy season, and the northeast monsoon from mid-October to mid-May, which brings dryer air from inland areas of the north (Climatological Group, 2015). At a micro-climatic level, however, areas to the east of this Tanon Tong Chai mountain range are often blocked by the mountain range itself making the area a rain shadow.

Despite the communities' close proximities to Mae Wong National Forest, which lends itself to the fertility of surrounding lands, this area is also a rain shadow. Thus, even though Thailand situates in a tropical area, the communities in Pang Tawai received on average 1,100 millimeters a year (Pang Tawai SAO, 2016) compared to the national average of 1,200 - 1,600 millimeters a year (Climatological Group, 2015). Subsequently, the SAO also considers water management as part of their development plans both for agricultural and household purposes. To do so, Pang Tawai SAO has compiled a survey data (Table 1-3) on water resources both for agricultural and household usage. It also looks at both natural sources of water including rivers, creeks, streams, ponds, and waterfalls, as well as manmade sources of water including reservoirs, weirs, pools, water channels, and local and regional water systems. The table below suggests that water scarcity is still one of the main issues in this tambon, or at the very least, it is still perceived as such.

Figure 1-5: Average land use density for residential and agricultural uses
Source: Pang Tawai SAO, 2016.



Demography

Most of the population here are first to third generation migrants from Phetchaboon and other provinces in the Northeastern part of Thailand. Despite these communities being moderately new, migrants have brought over the Northeastern spoken language, music genre, and other Northeastern cultures to this area. Ban Pang Malako (Moo 8) which is not included this research, however, also has a large hill tribe population called Lahu (Pang Tawai SAO, 2016).

The total population of 8,392 people lives in this tambon. Ban Phet Charoen (Moo 3) is the largest village with its total population of 1,261 in 376 households, and Ban Phet Mongkhon (Moo 9) is the smallest village with its total population of 461 in 168 households (Pang Tawai SAO, 2016). Both villages and Ban Wong Kao Tong are under the responsibility of Ban Phet Mongkhon School.

While the population density within this tambon is 134.98 people/sq.km., it may be more beneficial to look at the densities of residential areas and agricultural areas per household separately (Figure 1-5). One of the reasons behind this separation is the fact that most residents tend to cluster together whereas lands for agricultural uses are the residuals of settlements and forest reserve areas. Consequently, by looking at the density of residential land per household and agricultural land per household, the numbers suggest the average size of land for housing and farming that a family can have. On average for the whole tambon, each household can have 3,036 sq.m. or 0.75 acres of land for residential and 20,072 sq.m. or 4.96 acres of land for farming.

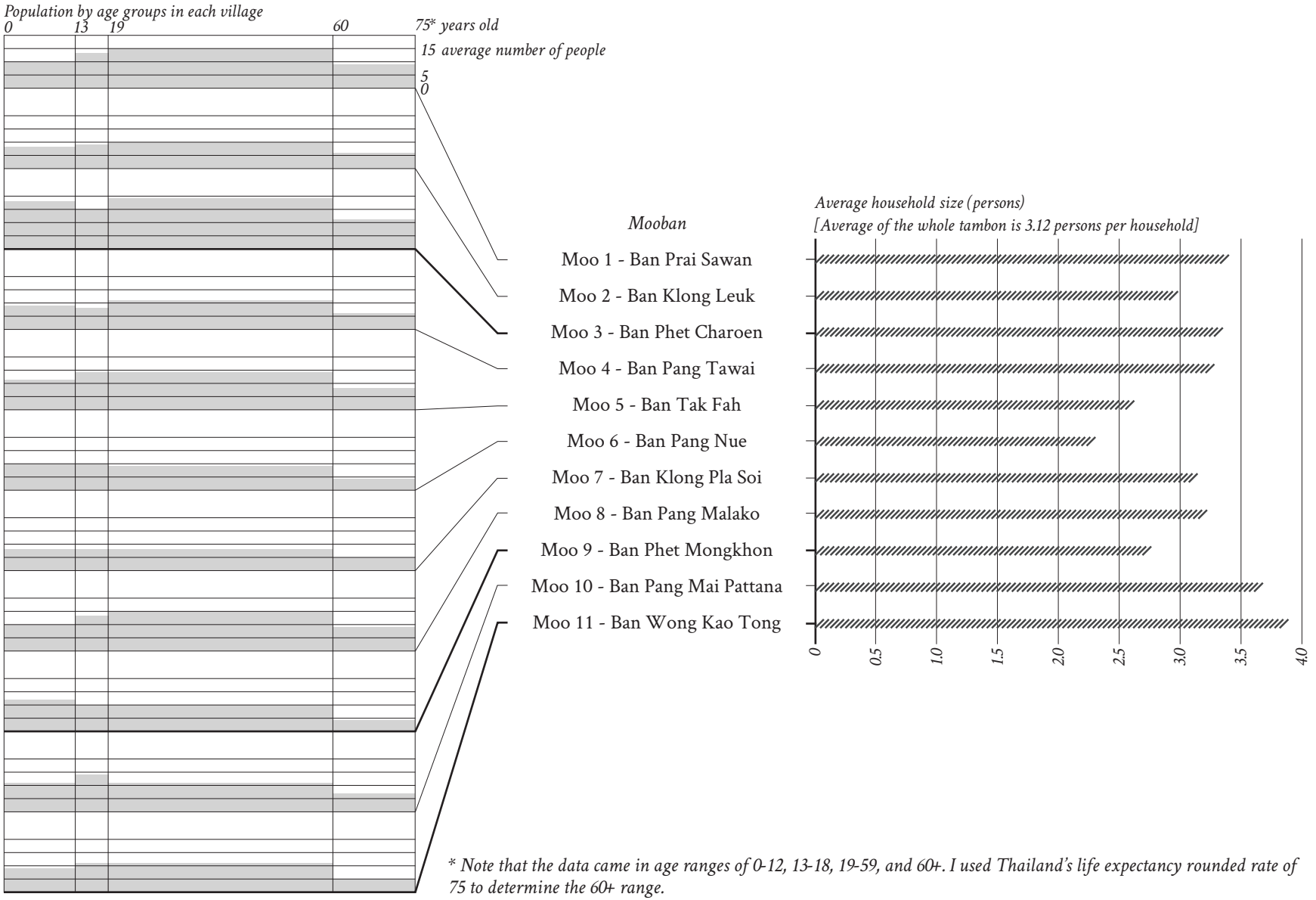
Regarding changes in population size, both Wirat Sopimpa and Ponsawan Kanrean, village heads of Moo 3 and Moo 9 respectively, perceive their village populations as ever growing in that people continue to give birth. However, the rate of birth which directly links to population change is not recorded. Furthermore, data on population sizes by age groups are also reported at an aggregated level with different intervals, which makes it difficult to understand the overall population trend. However, disaggregating population size in different age groups suggests an average number of people within each age. By looking at the results of the calculation, it can be inferred that the population in some villages has been on a slow decline and some have somewhat stabilized. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this crude analysis does not account for premature deaths or migration to cities. Additionally, by looking at numbers of students per academic year, Saowaluk Techai (Sao), a teacher at Ban Phet Mongkhon School who has moved here 6 years ago, sees that

there are fluctuations in the past, but the current number of students has been stable for the last couple of years. [...] The number of around 20 students per class, has been the average.

Despite the small household size, most people of working age tend to migrate seasonally to Bangkok for higher education or income opportunities when they are free from working on their farms. This phenomenon, however, rarely leads to an actual transference of household registration. Peraphet Pliakot

Figure 1-6: Average land use density for residential and agricultural uses

Source: Pang Tawai SAO, 2016.



** Note that the data came in age ranges of 0-12, 13-18, 19-59, and 60+. I used Thailand's life expectancy rounded rate of 75 to determine the 60+ range.*

(Phet), Deputy Chief Administrator of the Pang Tawai SAO, reports that less than 1% of the total population actually moves out of this tambon permanently. Phet, the Deputy Chief Administrator, further explains that most people tend to temporarily move out at around the age of 30-40, and start to come back around the age of 50 to continue working on their farms. On the other hand, although this migratory trend has mostly been temporary, Sao, the teacher at the school, also raises an important issue around child development, which is a consequence of this phenomenon. She sees this issue as one of the main challenges in this area.

"Parents often work elsewhere, and for some families, parents also do not pay enough attention to their kids. [...] Things are also progressing very fast, and when kids live with their grandparents, who are illiterate, they are unable to help them with school work. They also cannot prevent their kids from going out and racing on their motorcycles. That is the challenge."

Accessibility and Connectivity

Accessibility and connectivity in today's terms are comprised of physical movements, virtual connectivity, as well as a hybrid between the two such as online shopping or other delivery systems.

Regarding physical movements, Ban Phet Mongkhon School, the location in which this research takes place, is about 360 kilometers from Bangkok. While there are various options of commute such as public bus, vans, and an airport 170 kilometers away, driving has remained the most time-efficient and most convenient means of commute to the capital. Moving between adjacent villages is very convenient. Not only because villages are near each other, but also because most roads leading to larger communities are well paved and maintained. At the local scale, most people tend to use motorcycles as their main means of commute mostly because they are inexpensive compared to cars. Some students as young as 11- or 12-year-olds know how to drive motorcycles, and most seventh-graders and above tend to ride their motorcycles to school. Farmers, on the other hand, use motorized carts called e-taks for their commute to farmlands. Because remote roads toward farmlands are often unpaved, narrower than most streets, and filled with many potholes, these e-taks are most suitable for such conditions. Larger district roads support large trucks that carry sugarcane to sugar factories around the area.

In addition to conventional phones, virtual communications have only entered the community a few years ago, according to the students. With rapid telecommunication development, the whole tambon already has five cell towers from three different private cellular companies, namely AIS, DTAC, and TRUEMOVE (Pang Tawai SAO, 2016). Two of the cellular towers are situated at the entrance to Phet Mongkhon (Moo 9). Furthermore, Ban Phet Mongkhon School is also connected to the internet via fiber optic cables. Consequently, the use of internet and smartphones has become common among villagers. The benefit of this technology, not only provides people with better access to information, but Panya Pradapol, Chief Executive of the SAO, also suggests that virtual connectivity helps retain family ties when parents move to work in other cities.

Furthermore, e-commerce in Thailand has also been on the rise. Internet connection in rural areas such as Tambon Pang Tawai has allowed rural population to have access to merchandise that does not exist in local markets. Despite having one postal office in the whole tambon (Pang Tawai SAO, 2016), delivery services such as Lazada and Kerry Express are used more frequently due to their efficiency and reliability.

Public Infrastructures and Services

Existing public services in Tambon Pang Tawai provided by public agencies and civil societies are comprised of six main categories: water, electricity, road infrastructures, education, law enforcement, and public health. The first three categories are public infrastructures which have already been discussed in the previous sections, and the details of which are shown in Table 1-4. Thus, this section will only focus on the latter three items.

While the development plan continues to focus on these public infrastructures, other public services also play important roles in developing local human capacity and livelihood. One of the most important services that directly links to human development is education. In Tambon Pang Tawai, there are three schools that provide K-9 education, three schools that provide K-6 education, four kindergartens, and one non-formal education facility. The distribution of schools is presented in Figure 1-7.

While the extensive distribution of schools in this tambon also raises an issue of the quality of education, one possible indicator of such is the ratio of student to teacher. The argument goes in that smaller student to teacher ratio relates directly to class size, which in turn can help with class management. While the actual relationship between this ratio and education quality remains a debate, it is amongst one of many indicators for higher quality education (Whitehurst & Chingos, 2011). Interestingly, the average student to teacher ratio of 13:1 in this tambon (Table 1-5), not accounting for child development centers, is much lower than the national average of 17:1 (Ministry of Education, 2016). This low student to teacher ratio suggests that teachers in Tambon Pang Tawai may have more capacity to care for development each student.

While the existing education facilities are spread out and are doing their jobs to serve every community and child in the area, these facilities only cover up to the basic level of education or ninth grade by law. To continue studying in formal academic education, students can apply for public high schools in larger towns nearby such as Pang Sila Tong or Klong Lan. Other alternatives are to pursue vocational study in one of the six schools in the province or study part-time in the tambon's non-formal education.

Closely linked to education and youth development, law enforcement and policing is also another public service. The Pang Tawai SAO (2016) reports that crimes in this tambon mainly consist of petty crimes and drug abuse, which remains a consistent problem. For crimes, such as fist fights and stealing, but that often happen in blind spots, there is a community watch program that helps mitigate the problem. As for drug abuse, Sahut Kaewyung, the principal of Ban Phet Mongkhon School, reports that the police have been working closely with schools to help educate youths on negative effects of drugs. In addition to preventative programs, the SAO also provides rehabilitation programs for former drug abusers. In 2014, there were 47 people who joined the rehabilitation program. A year later ten more people joined

Table 1-4: Public infrastructure
Source: Pang Tawai SAO, 2016.

Water	*Units*
village water distribution system	8
Mountainous water distribution system	3
Water wells	27
Ponds for agricultural use	438
Ponds for household use	25

Electricity	*HH.*
Households with electricity	2,564
Connected to the grid	2,563
Use solar cells	1
Households without electricity	1

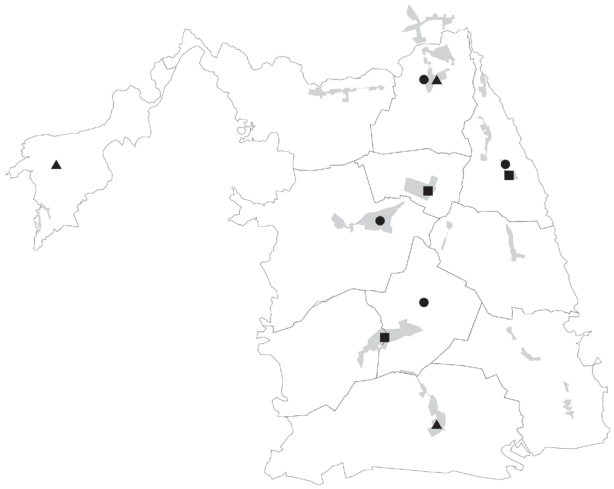
Road infrastructure	*Strips*
Total roads	156
Asphalt roads	10
Reinforced concrete roads	37
Dirt roads	109

Table 1-5: Student to teacher ratio for schools in Tambon Pang Tawai
Source: Pang Tawai SAO, 2016.

	Edu. levels	*Location*	*No. of students*	*No. of teachers*	*Student toSchools teacher ratio*
Klong Leuk Pattana School	K-9	Moo 2	205	15	14
Pang Tawai School	K-9	Moo 4	203	14	15
Ban Phet Mongkhon School	K-9	Moo 9	231	17	14
Prai Sawan School	K-6	Moo 1	129	12	11
Tak Fah Pattana School	K-6	Moo 5	75	5	15
Klong Pla Soi School	K-6	Moo 7	52	4	13
Prai Sawan Child Dev. Center	K	Moo 1	40	2	20
Klong Leuk Pattana Child Dev. Center	K	Moo 2	30	2	15
Phet Charoen Child Dev. Center	K	Moo 3	55	2	28
Pang Tawai Child Dev. Center	K	Moo 4	51	2	26

Figure 1-7: Location of schools by levels of education
Source of village shapefile: drawn by author as referenced from the map provided by the Pang Tawai SAO

■ Schools with education levels of K-9
▲ Schools with education levels of K-6
● Child development centers



and continued with the available career development program provided by the SAO.

Finally, in the aspect of public health service, there are two publicly owned health centers and two private clinics in Tambon Pang Tawai. Within these facilities, there are one public health manager, two public health experts, two public health officers, and three nurses. Moreover, there are around six larger hospitals within a 20-kilometer distance from this tambon to provide for more intensive cases. While the accessibility to health care services in this area is quite extensive and sufficient, there are also public health volunteer groups, which consist of villagers who are interested in preventative care and education. Throughout the tambon, there are 184 volunteers spread out in different villages. Through an interview with Sabkaew Boonmee (Gai), a public health volunteer in Phet Mongkhon, she has explained that her work mostly covers health education from birth to death. Aside from campaigning on public health to increase awareness, sometimes Gai also checks sugar level and blood pressure for people with diabetes and high blood pressure. In all, it can be said that public services in Tambon Pang Tawai are quite extensive and sufficient to its population.

Jobs and Economy

Most people in this tambon are either farmers who work on their own lands or farm labors who work on others' lands. Despite the fact that agriculture has been the backbone of Thai economy for centuries, another underlying factor that contributes to the concentration of farmers is the Agriculture Land Reform Office (ALRO), which was first established in 1975. Tambon Pang Tawai as a whole is part of the ALRO supervision, according to Panya Pradapol, Chief Executive of the SAO. Because of this land reform, under Section 30 of the Agriculture Land Reform Act (1975), aims to establish rights to land to farmers, the qualifications to ALRO land are as followed:

(1) Not to exceed 50 rai (80,000 sq.m.) for an agricultural worker and persons in the same family engaging in other fields of agricultural work, except as in (2);
(2) Not to exceed 100 rai (160,000 sq.m.) for an agricultural worker and persons in the same family engaging in animal husbandry classified as large animals according to the notification of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives;
(3) The land area must be used as the committee deems appropriate for an agricultural institution considering their category and procedures.

Furthermore, under Section 29 (3), ARLO has the ability to expropriate land which:

its owner does not personally work on the land for agriculture, or does not use the land for any other agricultural purposes, or only works in agriculture partially, or works on the land for agriculture only to show their rights over the land, the ARLO has the authority to buy or to expropriate the part of land which exceeds 20 rai (36,000 sq.m.).

Many farmers benefit directly from this land reformation law, and furthermore, the overall natural environment is kept away from toxic industrial developments. Nonetheless, the ALRO is also followed by many complexities around jobs and economic growth. Wirat Sopimpa, the head of Ban Phet Charoen Village, explains that people are sometimes allocated land in another location, which they do not want to move to. Hence, some chose not to have farmlands, and stay in this home region. These villagers without farmlands tend to become farm labors on other people's land, making their sources of income more limited as they are unable to sell their produce.

Another problem that follows from the ALRO land reformation is that it disallows civil servants such as teachers or SAO officers to inherit farmlands. In a case of Ponsawan Kanrean, head of Phet Mongkhon (Moo 9), despite his being a farmer who was voted to be the head of the village, all of his daughters are teachers which means that they are unable to inherit his farmland. On the other hand, in (3) of Section 30, the land allotted under the ALRO also needs to be used for agricultural purposes. There is a project called Yim La Mai in the surrounding area where the local owner develops her site to attract tourists and economic growth. The development is, thus, currently in the interrogation process with the ALRO, because its main use is not for agriculture. In summary, the concentration of farmers and farm workers in this area is partly due to historical contexts, but more importantly, it is also due to the legal

framework of the ALRO.

With farming as the main career in this tambon, most people grow sugarcane, cassava, corn, and rice. Other crops include rubber, eucalyptus, and palm. Because the overall nature of farming and agriculture is seasonal, many people use their free months away from farm work and engage in other types of jobs in cities. Most who identify themselves as farmers also engage in other side jobs such as working in stores, on construction sites, in technical work, including electricity and plumbing. These jobs, however, often require them to be in urban areas which creates some family problems including child development and others as mentioned in the section on demography. On the other hand, there are a few people who work in other sectors, such as a lottery-ticket seller, a seamstress, a trash buyer, teachers, and other civil servants. However, in a similar but reversed dynamics, most of these people engage with farm work when they are available from their other jobs. Overall, it is actually much harder to find a person who works solely in one thing or has only one career path.

Jobs are only one aspect of the whole economy of this place. The connectivity to other surrounding villages, towns, and cities, plays an important role in the economy and livelihood of people in this tambon. The connection to cities for jobs and education opportunities is an important element, which was discussed earlier.

In addition to nearby towns helping to provide basic services and facilities, the markets in these towns are also important elements to villagers' lives. These markets not only serve daily or weekly grocery shopping, but they are also places to buy goods, clothes, and other necessities. Furthermore, they are also hangout spots for adults as well as youths. Most importantly, however, they are outlets of farm produce and other products.

Markets in this area, however, are all temporary, meaning that each market location has a designated time of a week that vendors come together to sell. The larger the market, the more expensive it is to rent out a spot. Full-time vendors often have to commute to different spots within each day. A Thai-sausage vendor at a very small Phet Mongkhon market (around 20 vendors) said that it costs him $0.63 per day to be on this market, in addition to $6 annual cost. He can visit up to around four markets a day, and the price for each market ranges from $0.63 - $1.25 per day depending on the size of the market.

PERCEPTION OF PLACE

While the description of place through facts and figures gives a broad overview of the community in which this research took place, my intention has always been to see things from the local perspective. Thus, I decided to embed myself in the community for as long as my schedule allowed, which was about a month and a half from mid-December 2017 to the end of January 2018. I lived at the school in a shared room with Saowaluk Techai, or Sao as I called her, a teacher and an academic affairs coordinator at Ban Phet Mongkhon School. Throughout the duration, she helped me arrange times with students, introduced me to various aspects of life in the community, as well as connected me to local villagers and officers at the Sub-District Administrative Office. I spent most of my time at the school, where I held a series of workshops with fourteen eighth-graders (Figure 2-2) and twelve ninth-graders (Figure 2-3). For each group of students, I met with them about once or twice a week for an hour within each session.

The workshops were designed to glean students' perspectives towards their own community by first discussing differences between rural and urban areas. Through such conversations, concepts of development, modernity, and preferred lifestyles started to emerge. Students then were assigned to take photographs of their community and lifestyles. Afterward, each student would volunteer to tell stories about their own selected photographs: what these photos made students think of, and why these photos are significant. Throughout these presentations, conversations began to emerge, and I started asking about locally existing opportunities and challenges. In other words, I used photography as means to elicit stories by using students' photographs as the center of our conversations (Rose, 2016). Opportunities and challenges then became the main theme of our discussions, which allowed me to understand students' perceptions towards their community. These perceptions also link directly to students' lives and life decisions. Thus I began to have students build on the emerged keywords by rearranging their importance and grouping them into topic areas for further investigation. By the end of the workshop, students in the two classes began to work together in groups based on their interests to create a photography exhibition at the school. Students selected their own photos to exhibit and provided their own description for each one. The detail of the students, the workshops, and the activities are described in Appendix A.

The workshop outputs were highly valuable to me and the research as well as to students as they do not have a lot of opportunity to discuss these issues. This chapter aims to retell those important conversations and tries to systematically make sense of such data. Hence, this chapter is organized in four sections: 1) perception of place through photographs, 2) perception of rural and urban areas, 3) personal interests and aspirations, and 4) relating the existing conditions to life decisions.

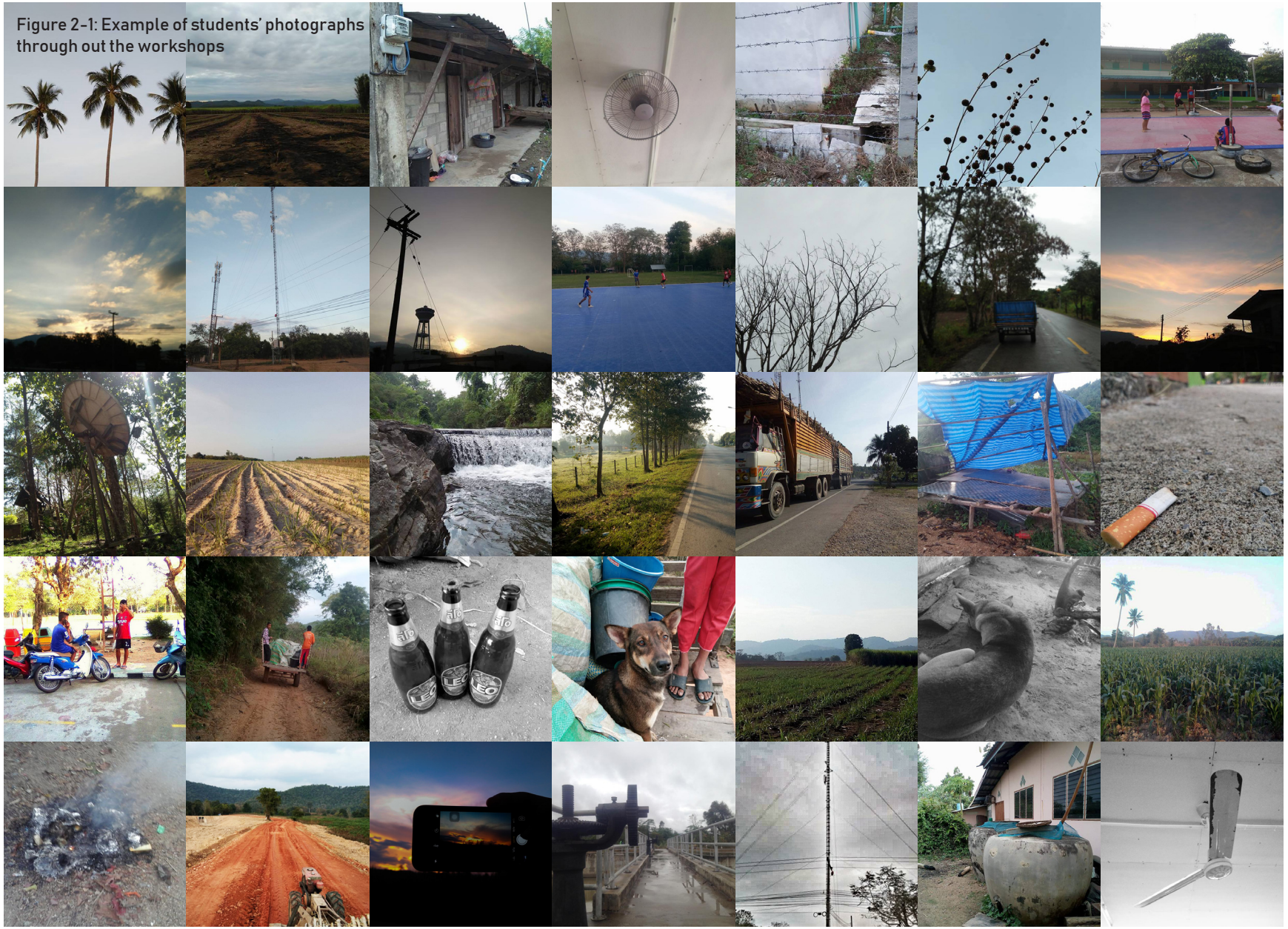


Figure 2-1: Example of students' photographs through out the workshops

Perception of Place Through Photographs

This section looks at a photography assignment on "challenges and opportunities within the community," which I gave to students after the second workshop session. In this workshop, I first spent about forty-five minutes showing them photographs by various photographers. We then discussed each image's composition, subject matter, intended meaning, and most importantly, how the image makes students feel. After I gave the students the photo assignment, we spent the last fifteen minutes discussing various challenges and opportunities in the villages to help prompt the students before going out to photograph (Figure 2-1). The students had eight days to photograph as the assignment was given over the New Year Holiday.

In the following workshop, each student chose three photographs from their individual collection to present to the class. For each photograph, students started out by telling the class what the photograph was about, and then I asked probing questions to better understand the context and the significance of the subject matter.

For this section, I choose some of the significant dialogues that happened within the class and present them together with corresponding images, which engendered the subsequent dialogues. I then try to translate those dialogues into what I understand to be the students' perception of place.

Figure 2-2: Group of eighth graders

Figure 2-3: Group of ninth graders

Exhibit 2-1: Unified Nature | photographed by Rathikarn Peungdee (Ning)

Un *[Nature and people] are different, because people can do a lot more things.*

Too *Nature can also do [a lot of things].*

Ning *Nature creates, but human destroys. Sometimes humans also create, but they are not [always environmental friendly].*

Too *But things that people create, we also get them from nature.*

Ning *It's like they are both dependent on each other.*

Too *Nature can survive without humans.*

Un *But people cannot survive without nature, because we depend on nature for settlements, shelters, food, and water.*

Ning *It feels like they are both dependent on each other, but sometimes human live off of nature and we take over too much of natural space.*

Exhibit 2-2: Yoob-Hua-Chang | photographed by Sarawut Nakun (Wut)

Wut *This has recently been reconstructed. The first time they made this [dam], it was made out of concrete. They redid everything, so that they can retain more water and put fish in.*

Wan *So before when it was a concrete dam, it was not...*

Wut *It was not enough. It was smaller, so they expanded it. Before this area used to have a lot of elephants, so they called it Yoob-Hua-Chang*. [The elephants] no longer [come down here]. People took over the space.*

Ning *That area has already been turned into farms.*

Wan *Have you ever got to see any [elephants] when you were growing up?*

All *No.*

* *Chang means elephant in Thai.*

The conversation on Exhibit 2-1 started out as Ning talked about the unity of plants being blown by the wind. The conversation became more interesting as it diverted towards the relationships and the differences between humans and nature. The significant concept which this discussion reveals is the students' acknowledgment of the importance of nature to their lives. Ning pointed out that sometimes people overtook nature too much and implied that by doing so, we become more vulnerable as we depend so much on nature.

Throughout my experience, villagers and teachers sometimes told me that this whole area used to be a large forest, but many of the trees were cut down and commodified. As time progressed, the forest area declined, and now most of the residential and farm areas are no longer occupied by wild animals like the story of Yoob-Hua-Chang that Wut told (Exhibit 2-2). These students were born into the community when the forests were already gone. However, the relationship that students have with nature remains very tangible because of their proximity to natural resources. Students often expressed appreciation towards the fresh air and natural abundance that they have in the community and discontent towards any types of pollution.

Exhibit 2-3: E-Taks | photographed by Sarawut Nakun (Wut)

Wut *This is how people go out to work on their farms. We went on this e-tak to go to our casava plantation.*

Wan *What are the sticks [on the cart]?*

Wut *Those are casava branches.*

Un *That's the engine of the e-tak.*

Wut *And that's the water tank at the temple.*

Wan *Do they pull water from underground and store it in the tank?*

Wut *Yes, and they let water run down towards the village.*

Exhibit 2-4: Vegetables Gardening | photographed by Pornjarat Tunpirat (Un)

Un *This photo shows the lifestyle here. They grow their own vegetables in their garden, so that they do not have to buy them.*

Wan *What are they planting?*

Un *Those are scallions.*

Wan *I'm curious. Why do they elevate the bucket from the ground?*

Un *Maybe because the soil is not very good, so they elevated it.*

Ning *Maybe it is because of floods?*

In relations to the natural surroundings, farming is also central to villagers' lives. Some students go with their parents to farm, but from the conversations among the two groups, not many students have been exposed to farming. Wut is one of the students who seems more knowledgeable in farming. Exhibit 2-3 is Wut's photograph while he accompanied his uncle to their cassava fields.

On the left of the image, Wut also captured a white water tank, which is used to distribute water to different households downhill. This image together with Exhibit 2-2 highlights water as another interesting facet of rural life, which is reflective of Table 1-2 in the first chapter. A variety of water retention and distribution systems can be found spread out along different corners of the community so that it becomes hard for students to pinpoint where tap water actually comes from. In addition to water supply, students also talked about water quality and how their tap water sometimes has particles in it.

Aside from their farms, many households in Tambon Pang Tawai grow their own vegetables in their garden like in Exhibit 2-4, to follow King Rama IX's development theory of "sufficiency economy"—a life philosophy on self-reliance and self-sustainability. Sufficiency economy is a nation-wide campaign implemented by various governmental agencies. This concept will also be further discussed in the following chapters.

Exhibit 2-4 also shows the emergence of issues around soil quality and flooding. I later found that much of the soil here comprises of sand, which is known to have less water retention capability, and thus, less nutrition for vegetation. Due to a lack of surface water retention of sandy soil, flooding has been a rare phenomenon. Students have told me that they have only witnessed a couple of floods in their lives and each time it would only last for a couple of hours before the water gets drained away. These flash floods, nonetheless, can also cause detrimental effects to agricultural produce in the farms.

Exhibit 2-5: Gathering | photographed by Sutinai Wangkeeree (Nick)

Nick *It's a village lifestyle. The community is not crowded and people would sit together and enjoy themselves. This was in front of my house.*

Wan *Why do people choose to gather in front of your place?*

Un *Well, it was cold, so people gather to stay warm near the fire. When one house starts making a fire, other people would join for warmth and to chat.*

Exhibit 2-6: Alcohol | photographed by Sutinai Wangkeeree (Nick)

Wan *Why were you interested in this subject?*

Nick *Well, it's a form of entertainment and socializing with friends. Like, if people compete in some sports and win, they would have to drink and celebrate.*

Wan *So is there any household that does not drink alcohol?*

Many *No, [everyone drinks].*

Within the small confines of residential areas, villagers tend to know each other well. As shown in Exhibit 2-5, Nick captured a casual gathering of elders in front of his house. Wooden shelters like these can be seen in front of almost every house throughout the village. I often saw kids playing around these shelters, or I would also see old people sitting, napping, or just hanging out under them. These shelters thus symbolize invitations to hang out as well as reflect on people's trusts for each other.

In addition to individual relationships and interactions, social events also happen quite frequently. In large events, karaoke, alcohol, food, and dancing are main components that bring people together. To me, this is the vibrancy of life within this community—the intimate relationships that one can always enjoy themselves however they like.

On the other hand, as I explored various parts of the village, I often found campaign signs to remind people to stop and/or reduce their drinking habit. The discussion in Exhibit 2-6, thus, hints at potential health issues in the area: people drink a lot. While there are no records of alcoholics, once in a while I would hear about a drunkard having a fit with other villagers.

Despite such struggles, I also witnessed that teachers and staffs at the school along with their children and spouses share almost every meal together. Through my experience, I also began to understand that the concept of a family in this village extends beyond one's immediate family and includes anyone else who is recognized as a friend.

Exhibit 2-7: Cellular Towers | photographed by Pornjarat Tunpirat (Un)

Un *This photo shows a more convenient lifestyle because we now have cellular signals. It's more conveinent, unlike before when there was no connectivity.*

Wan *So in a way this is a development that has entered the village?*

Un *Yes.*

Wan *And do you think this development is good or should...*

Un *Well, it should be improved to be faster. It's currently very slow.*

Wan *So, it is a good start, but it should continues to be developed?*

Un *Yes.*

Exhibit 2-8: E-Tak | photographed by Pornjarat Tunpirat (Un)

Un *I took this photo because it shows a village lifestyle, which is different from the city. Villagers have to go into their farms. In cities people use cars, but we use motorized carts, called e-taks. It's a way of life, a way of living in rural areas.*

Wan *Do you see this lifestyle as opportunities or things which need to be improved?*

Un *There's nothing to improve, it's more convenient to work in a farm like this.*

Ning *[Imagine] driving a car to the farm!*

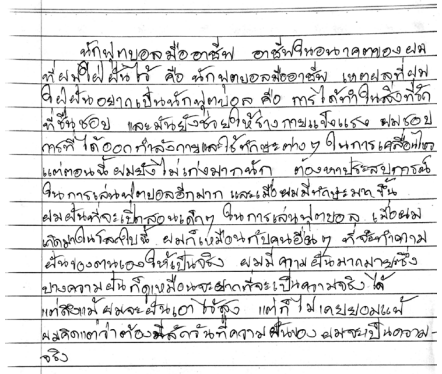
Wan *When you said that it's already good, you meant it is suitable?*

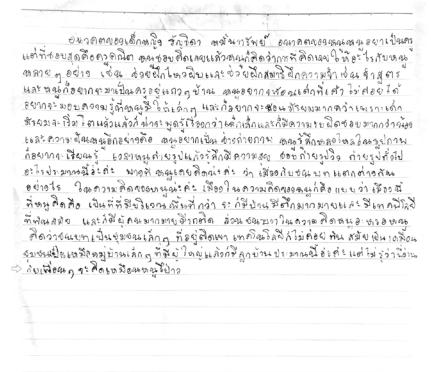
Un *It is already suitable, there is nothing much to improve.*

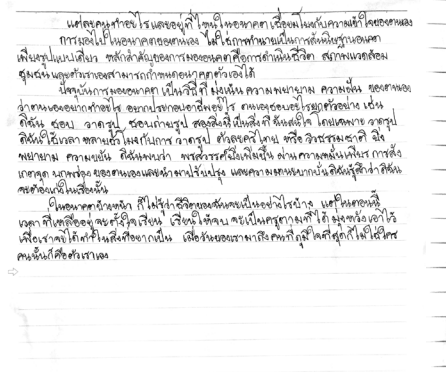
Access to the internet and cellular signals is an element that cannot be overlooked as it has changed a lot of people's lifestyles in this community. Almost every student has a smartphone, and the school has available Wi-Fi connections. As shown in Exhibit 2-7, the internet speed is an issue that reflects their dependency on this new technology for various purposes including entertainment, academics, and others. Because cellular data is still quite costly, most students would spend their free time at the school so that they can use the school's free Wi-Fi to play games. On the other hand, some students used the internet to help them with their homework and as a tool for learning.

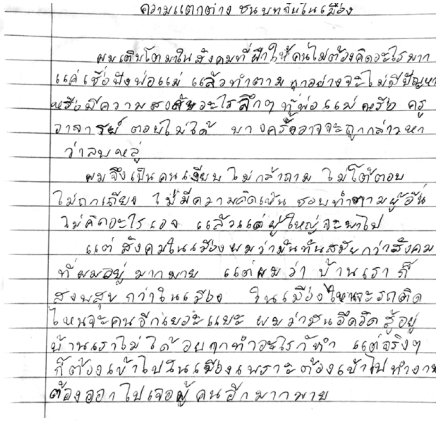
As smartphones have already entered the community, it is such a contrast to also see these motorized carts called e-taks (Exhibit 2-8) running along dirt roads—perhaps a symbol of backwardness in the presence of technological advancement. However, the conversation in Exhibit 2-8 also shows that the comparison can be less focused on stages of development but more on suitability within existing contexts. In other words, things that are considered to be development might not necessarily be suitable for the existing context.

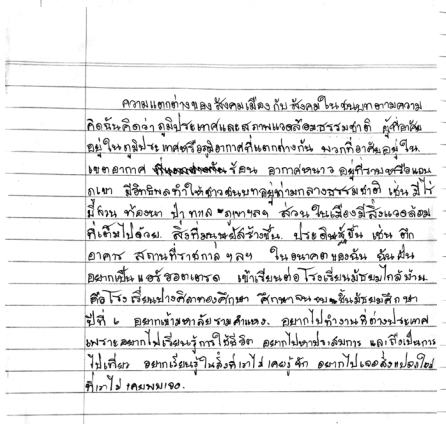
Figure 2-4: Example of students' written work

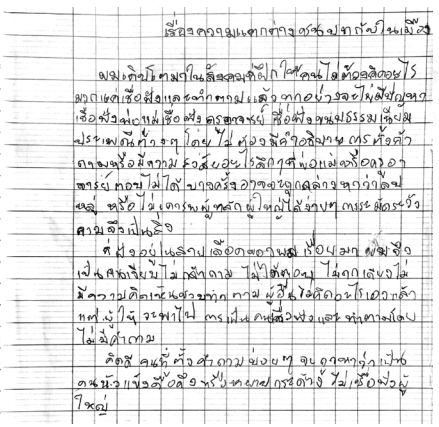


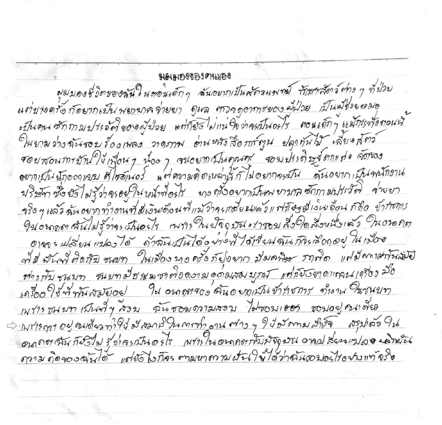


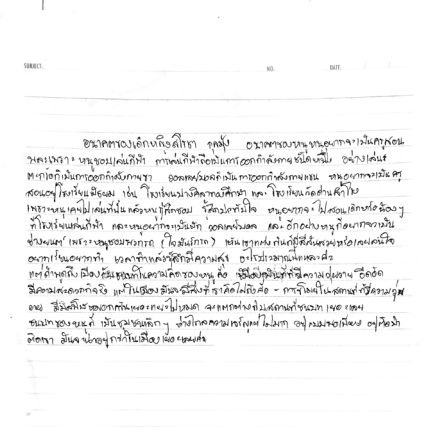


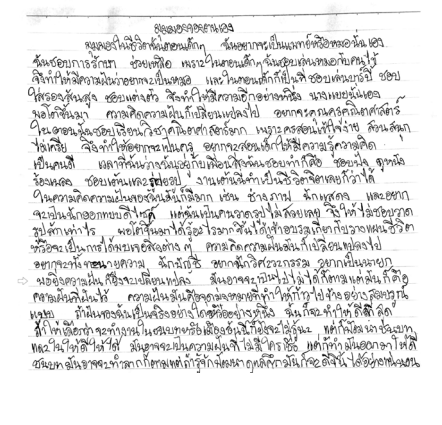


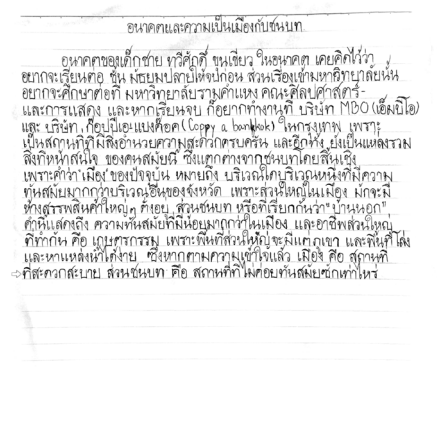


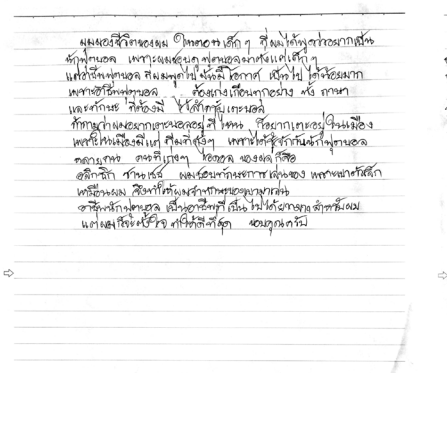


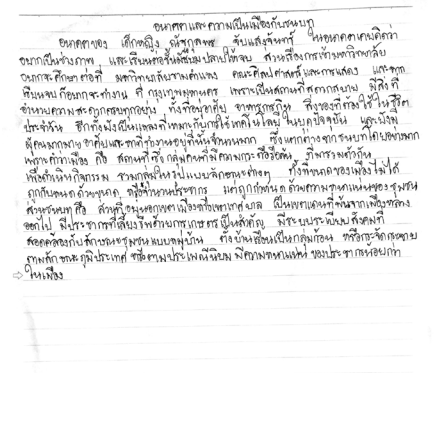










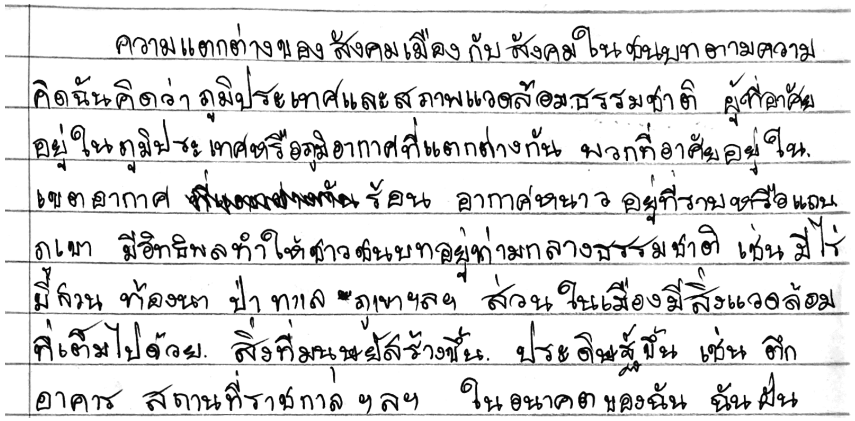


Perception of rural and urban areas

After the first workshop session in which I introduced my research project and laid out the workshop activities for the upcoming month, I gave the students the first assignment: to write a short reflection about their aspired futures in relation to their perception of urban and rural areas (Figure 2-4). Some students ended up reflecting more on the differences of rural versus urban areas and what those distinctions mean to them, while some reflected more on their career aspirations. This section will focus on the students' perceptions towards rural and urban qualities through their written work.

All of the participating students have visited Bangkok under different conditions and occasions. One student was born in Bangkok and grew up there until he was around ten years old. He had to move back to this village due to family issues. Another student has been to Bangkok quite often with his uncle, who is a wallpaper contractor. He said that he enjoyed working with his uncle. Some students have gone to Bangkok for national events such as in sports or essay writing competitions. For the rest of the students, their first and only experience of Bangkok was in 2017, a year after King Rama IX passed away. Following the king's death, the government allocated a large site in the heart of Bangkok to accommodate people from all parts of Thailand to come and pay respect to the late king before the cremation ceremony in October 2017. Ban Phet Mongkhon School arranged a day-trip for all of its students and teachers to visit the site in the middle of 2017. These experiences of Bangkok together with other media, which is largely produced in Bangkok, help shape students' perception of urban areas and mark the conceptual differences between rural and urban environment.

The exhibits in this section are constructed from students' handwritten pieces. For each pieces, I then selected and translated a specific section, which reveals interesting underlying rationale related to the rural and urban distinctions. Lastly, I incorporated my own photographs, chosen to help contextualize the student's messages.



ความแตกต่างของสังคมเมืองกับสังคมในชนบทตามความ
คิดฉันคิดว่าภูมิประเทศและสภาพแวดล้อมธรรมชาติ ผู้ที่อาศัย
อยู่ในภูมิประเทศหรือภูมิอากาศที่แตกต่างกัน พวกที่อาศัยอยู่ใน.
เขตอากาศ ~~ที่แตกต่างกัน~~ ร้อน อากาศหนาว อยู่ที่ราบหรือแถบ
ภูเขา มีอิทธิพลทำให้ชาวชนบทอยู่ท่ามกลางธรรมชาติ เช่น มีไร่
มีสวน ท้องนา ป่า ทาเล ภูเขาฯลฯ ส่วนในเมืองมีสิ่งแวดล้อม
ที่เต็มไปด้วย. สิ่งที่มนุษย์สร้างขึ้น. ประดิษฐ์ขึ้น เช่น ตึก
อาคาร สถานที่ราชกาล ฯลฯ ในอนาคตของฉัน ฉันฝัน

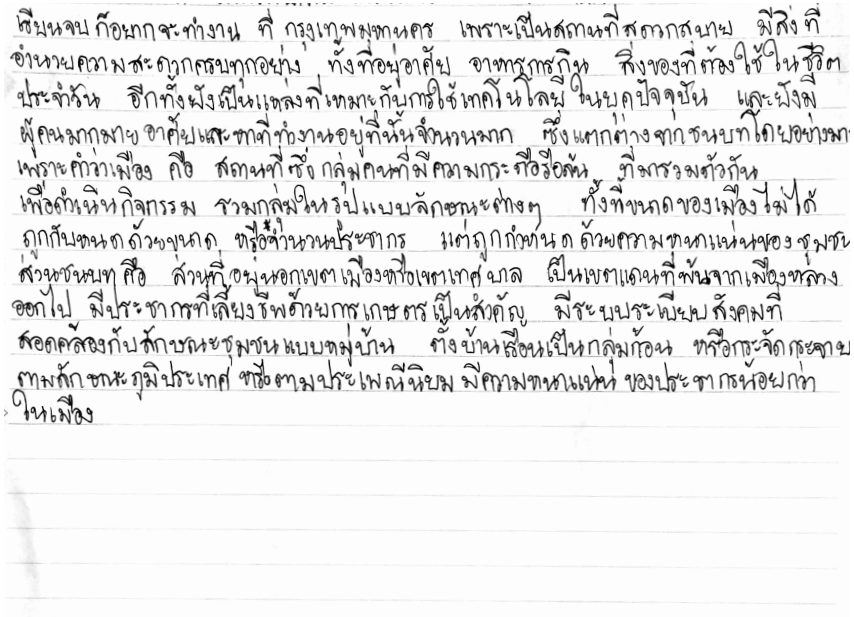
Exhibit 2-9: Rural and Urban I written by Pataranit Kamniam (Nite)

The difference between an urban and a rural community, I think, lies in the geography and the environment: people who live in different geographies or climates, those who live in hot climate or cold climate, and those who live in flat plains or in mountains. These all have influences on rural population to live among nature. For example, there are crops, farms, rice fields, forests, oceans, mountains, etc. On the other hand, a city's environment is filled with man-made stuff, such as high rises, buildings, service offices, etc. [...]

Exhibit 2-10: Rural and Urban I written by Nutkunporn Jubsangjan (Nut)

[...] When I graduate [from a university], I wish to work in Bangkok, because it is a convenient place. It has a lot of supporting facilities and amenities such as housing, food, and other daily necessities. It is also a place which is suitable for modern technology. It has a lot of people living and working there, which is very different from rural areas. [This is] because the term "city" means a place that enthusiastic people gather to do something together [...]. A city is not defined by its size or its population, but it is rather defined by the density of its [inhabitants].

As for the term "rural", it is the area outside of cities or municipalities. It is an area outside of the capital city with most of its population working in the agriculture sector. It has social systems and structures that relate to a village type of community: housing that are clustered together, spread out along the existing geography, or organized by its cultural preferences. It has less population density than in a city.



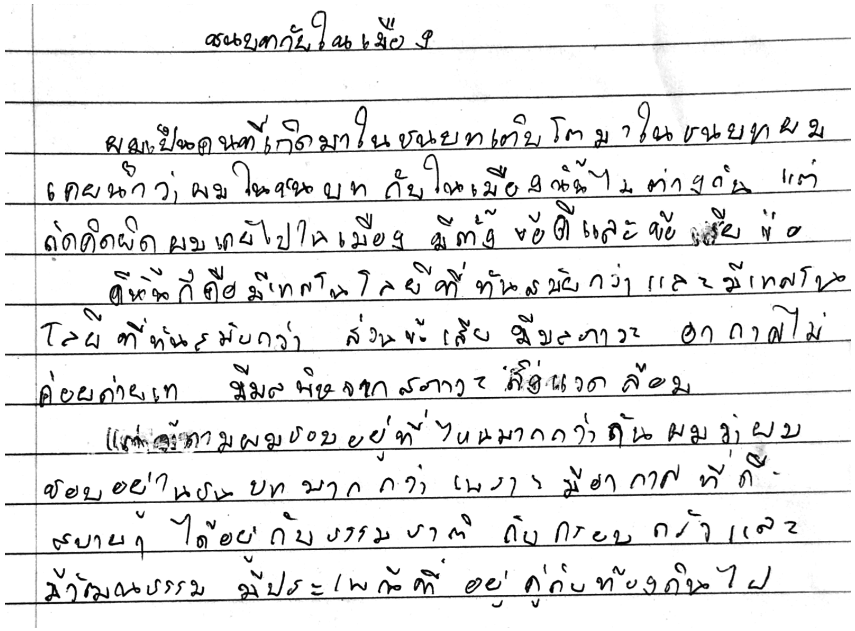


Exhibit 2-11: written by Panupong Boonmee (Tiw)

I have been born and brought up in a rural context. I used to think that rural and urban areas are the same, but I was wrong. I have been to cities and it is both good and bad. A good thing is that it has modern technologies, but bad things are pollution, stuffy air, and environmentally toxic. If you ask me where I prefer to live in, I would prefer a rural area more, because it has good air quality, it is relaxing, I get to live with nature and my family, and it has culture and traditions that align with the place.

Exhibit 2-12: written by Tanyaboon Baotee (Note)

[...] urban areas are much more modernized than my community, but I think our village is also more peaceful. In cities, there's traffic congestion and overcrowding population. I think it's very crowded and incomparable to our village, where we can do anything we like. However, in reality I will have to go into the city for work and to meet many other people.

แต่สังคมในเมืองผมว่ามันทันสมัยกว่าสังคม
ที่ผมอยู่มากมาย แต่ผมว่าบ้านเราก็
สงบสุขกว่าในเมือง ในเมืองไหนจะรถติด
ไหนจะคนอีกเยอะแยะ ผมว่ามันอึดอัดสู้อยู่
บ้านเราไม่ได้อยากทำอะไรก็ทำ แต่จริงๆ
ก็ต้องเข้าไปในเมืองเพราะต้องเข้าไปทำงาน
ต้องออกไปเจอผู้คนอีกมากมาย

Nite's description as shown in Exhibit 2-9 highlights the distinction between rural and urban areas through the types of surrounding environment, where the former is immersed in nature, and the latter is enclosed by built structures. The concept of being close to nature, including farms and forests alike, emerges time and again throughout the workshop series as natural environment affects the community's visual quality, sense of place, and way of life.

The expansive natural environment also relates to population density, which Nut focuses in Exhibit 2-10. Subsequently, Nut also touches on an important issue of job variety which is much higher in urban areas (Exhibit 2-10). When Nut talks about Bangkok as "a place that enthusiastic people gather to do something together," her words reflect the agglomeration effect of density. Furthermore, her message also hints at a higher level of vibrancy, energy, and activity of life in the city of Bangkok. On the contrary, she also mentions how in rural areas there are only agricultural jobs.

Despite the vibrancy that Nut alludes to, density also brings negative side effects such as Tiw's recognition of unpleasant air quality (Exhibit 2-11) and Note's mentioning of traffic congestion (Exhibit 2-12). While Tiw and Note both see these negative effects, the reactions to their own arguments are different. Family ties and cultural strengths are strong-enough pull factors that influence Tiw's inclination to stay put in the community. On the contrary, despite Note's preference for the rural lifestyle, he also sees the need to move into the city and expand his perspective and social circles.

Nite's and Nut's reflections build up a good basis for debates on life in a city versus a rural area, which is reflected in Tiw's and Note's reflections. Students have captured the extreme distinctive qualities between rural and urban areas which contribute to their inclination towards moving or staying put. While other students have also depicted other aspects of rural and urban divides, I specifically chose to highlight these reflections as they are qualities which most students agreed on. Naturally, each person may weight and perceive these elements differently, but because these elements are obvious distinctions between rural and urban areas, they do affect students' decisions in one way or another.

To summarize, in the rural community some of the attractions or pull factors include nature, easy lifestyle, family, and familiar culture. On the other hand, urban areas are attractive in their vibrancy, diversity of jobs, and modern lifestyle. However, such appeals also come with tradeoffs including pollution, air quality, and traffic congestion.

Personal interest and aspiration

Before giving out the writing assignment in the previous section, which not every student turned in, I also used the introductory session to ask all of the twenty-six students about their aspirations to help prompt them to write. Figure 2-5 on the right shows a broad overview of the distribution of students' interests by sector of work. Many of these aspirations relate closely to students' experiences within their community and may largely be influenced by available facilities which allow students to explore and engage with their interests. Some of those facilities include soccer fields, courts for other sports, forestry office, health centers, and schools. Additionally, media such as TV programs and internet sites may have also influenced students who are interested in the entertainment and media sector as well as the student who is interested in working in the airline services.

As mentioned in the previous section, through the same assignment, some students chose to reflect on their career interest instead of the differences between rural-urban areas. These reflections give a more holistic and granular understanding of students' rationale and options. I will be using some of the reflections to highlight students' career interests which relate to their decisions to leave or stay put in the community.

It is also important to mention that many students are still exploring their career choices, and these aspirations are bound to change like many of us who have experienced career changes in our own lives too. This temporal nature of aspiration and interest points out to a gap in the research especially because I chose to target the younger generation whose ideas generally fluctuates more than adults' do.

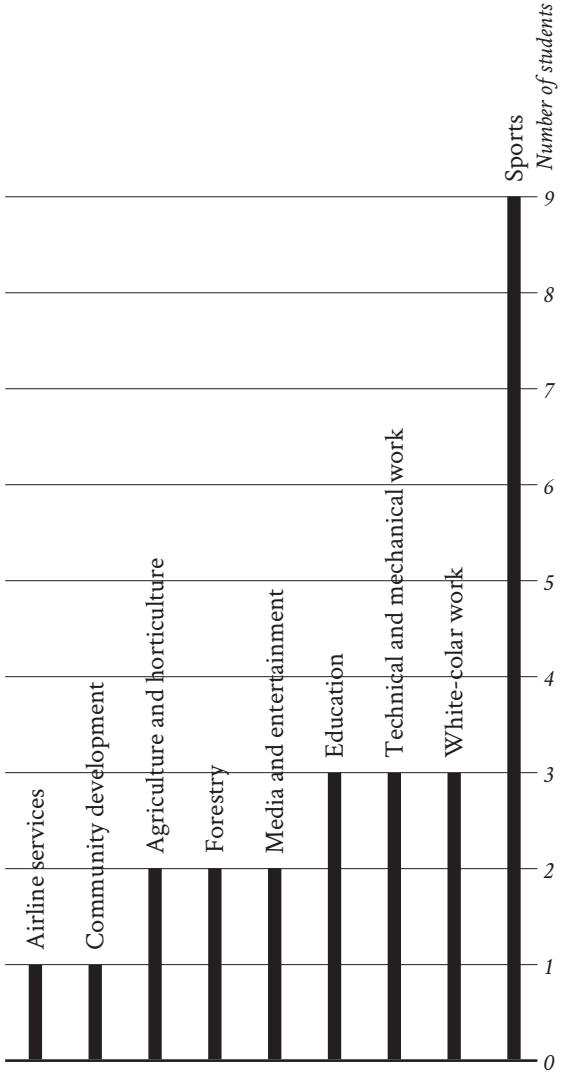


Figure 2-5: Share of students' career interests

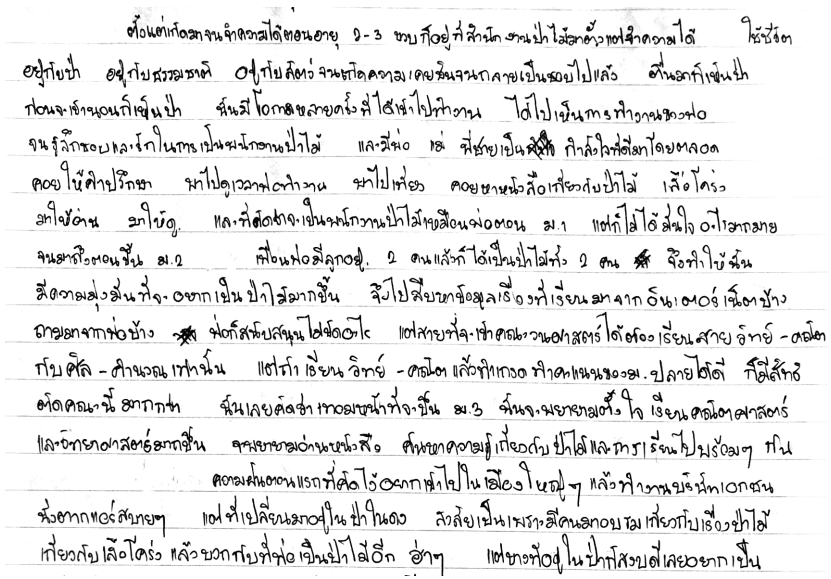


Exhibit 2-13: Forester | written by Rathikarn Peungdee (Ning)

[...], I have always lived in the forestry office—living with the forest, the nature, and animals. I have grown used to it. I see the forest when I wake up, and I see the forest before I go to sleep. I have had a lot of opportunities to [...] see my dad's work, which made me fall in love with being a forester. My dad, my mom, and my older brother have also continued to support and advise me. They have taken me to see my dad at work, taken me to travel, and bought me books about forestry and animals [...]. I thought about wanting to become a forester when I was in 7th grade, but I did not pay too much attention to it. Now that I am in 8th grade, my dad's friend has 2 children who both got to become foresters. It made me become more determined to work with the forest. [...] My first dream was to go into cities and work in a private company sitting comfortably in an air-conditioned room. However, I guess I have changed to [want to work] in the forests, because we had a session about forests and tigers [at our school] in addition to having my dad working as a forester. Or maybe, it is because living in a forest is peaceful.

Exhibit 2-14: Civil servant | written by Sudarat Suwannakam (Gook)

I want to have a job that allows me to receive salary after my retirement. That is to become a civil servant. In the future I do not know what I will become, because presently when I like something, it may change in the future. If I get to become something that I wrote, I would like to be in a city that is close to a rural area. In cities, sometimes life is too difficult having to deal with polution and traffic jams, but it is also more modern which is different from rural areas. Rural areas have abundant natural environment but they still lack modern tools. In the future, I wish to become a civil servant working in rural areas, because these areas are peaceful. I like serenity and do not like entertainment much. I like to be alone, because being alone allows me to concentrate on my work and become more successful. To conclude, I am not sure what I will become in the future, because my ideas can change. Nonetheless, I will try to find out what my true aspirations are.

จริง ๆ แล้ว ฉันอยากทำงานที่มีเงินเดือนที่แม้ว่าจะเกษียนแล้ว แต่ก็ยังมีเงินเดือน ก็คือ ข้าราชการ
ในอนาคต ฉันไม่รู้ว่าจะเป็นอะไร เพราะในปัจจุบัน เราชอบสิ่งใดสิ่งหนึ่งแล้ว ในอนาคต
อาจจะเปลี่ยนแปลงได้ ถ้าฉันเป็นได้อย่างที่ได้เขียนฉันก็จะเลือกอยู่ในเมือง
ที่มีพื้นที่ติดกับชนบท ในเมืองบางครั้งก็ยุ่งยาก มีมลพิษ รถติด แต่มีความทันสมัย
ต่างกับชนบท ชนบทมีธรรมชาติของความอุดมสมบูรณ์ แต่ก็ยังขาดแคลนเครื่องมือ
เครื่องใช้ที่ทันสมัยอยู่ ในอนาคตของฉันอยากเป็นข้าราชการ ทำงานในชนบท
เพราะชนบทเป็นที่ๆ สงบ ฉันชอบความสงบ ไม่ชอบเอ๊ะ ชอบอยู่คนเดียว
เพราะการอยู่คนเดียวทำให้มีสมาธิในการทำงานต่าง ๆ ให้มีความสำเร็จ สรุปแล้ว ใน
อนาคตฉันก็ยังไม่รู้ว่าจะเป็นอะไร เพราะในอนาคตกับปัจจุบัน อาจเปลี่ยนแปลงผลิตผัน
ความคิดของฉันได้ แต่ยังไงก็จะตามหาความฝันให้ได้ว่าฉันชอบอะไรอย่างแท้จริง

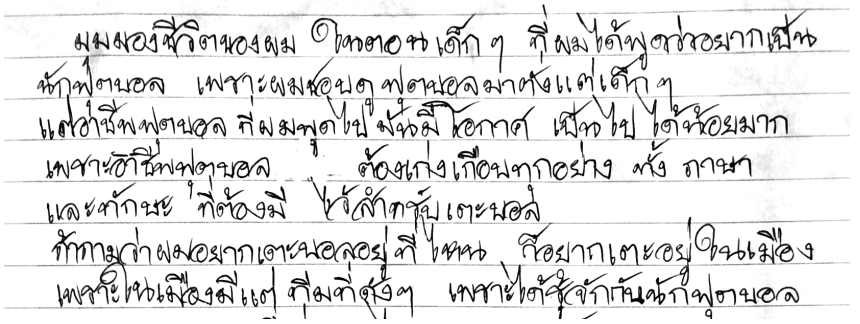
อยากจะเรียนต่อ ซัน มัธยมปลายให้จบก่อน ส่วนเรื่องเข้ามหาวิทยาลัยน่ะ
อยากจะศึกษาต่อที่ มหาวิทยาลัยรามคำแหง คณะศิลปศาสตร์-
และการแสดง และหากเรียนจบ ก็อยากทำงานที่ บริษัท MBO (เอ็มบีโอ
และ บริษัท ก๊อปปี้เอ๋แบงค็อค (Copy a bankkok) ในกรุงเทพ เพราะ
เป็นสถานที่ที่มีสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกครบครัน และอีกทั้ง ยังเป็นแหล่งรวม
สิ่งที่หน้าสนใจ ของคนสมัยนี้ ซึ่งแตกต่างจากชนบทโดยสิ้นเชิง

Exhibit 2-15: Creative | written by Taweesak Kunkiaw (Tle)

"(...) I want to continue to study and finish my high school education first. As for college, I want to study at Ramkamhaeng University in the Arts Department focusing on acting. If I finish, I want to work at MBO or Copy A' Bangkok company in Bangkok, because it is a place with all kinds of convenient services and available amenities. Moreover, (the city) is also a place with many interesting things for this generation, which is starkly different from a rural area."

Exhibit 2-16: Soccer player | written by Poompat Gingnok (Pu)

Since I was young, I have always said that I want to become a soccer player. That is because I love watching soccer. However, there is only a slim chance and opportunity [for me] to become a professional soccer player, because this profession requires me to be good at almost everything from language to soccer skills. If you ask me where I want to play, I would say in the city, because the city has a lot of renown teams and I will also get to know other soccer players as well.



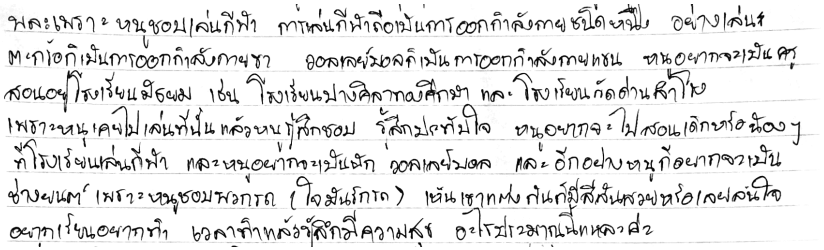


Exhibit 2-17: Motorist | written by Sarocha Kulmoong (Noey)

I want to become a physical education teacher, because I love playing sports. Playing sports is a way to exercise, for example, playing sepak takraw is a good leg exercise or playing volleyball is a good arm exercise. I want to become a high school teacher either in Pang Sila Tong Seuksa School [in Pang Sila Tong], or Wat Dan Samrong School [in Samut Prakarn within the greater Bangkok metropolitan area]. I have visited Wat Dan Samrong School and I really liked it. I was impressed. I want to teach kids at sport schools, and I want to become a volleyball player. Another thing that I want to become is a mechanic, because I love [motorcycles]. My heart is into them. I have seen people redesigning them with beautiful colors, and I became interested to learn how. When I work on it, it makes me happy. [...]*

* *Sepak Takraw or kick volleyball is a sport native to Southeast Asia*

I put students' career aspirations into three broad categories: 1) careers that exist in rural areas, 2) careers that do not exist in rural areas, and 3) careers that are not place-based.

Many students who can see themselves pursuing existing careers around their villages can also see themselves staying put in rural areas in the future. Some of those careers include teachers, foresters, farmers, and civil servants. Ning and Gook are examples of those students. Ning's interest lies in forestry as described in Exhibit 2-13, and Gook's interest is in becoming a civil servant (Exhibit 2-14). In addition to Ning and Gook, Too is also interested in being a forester, Wut wishes to become a fisherman, and Yew wants to continue working at his family's chicken farm. These verbal and written reflections show a limitation of job prospects within the rural area.

On the other hand, other students who are more keen towards living in cities are interested in other career choices that do not exist in rural areas such as being a flight attendant, an office employee, and a creative in the entertainment business. Tle is a great example of those students (Exhibit 2-15). His ambition to work as a creative in the film industry is very clear and specific. His reflection shows that he has done research on his career prospects and it is specific to the companies in which he wishes to work for. More importantly, it is clear that it will be extremely difficult to pursue a career like such in his hometown. Aside from Tle, there are also other students whose interests lie outside of the agriculture and forestry sectors. Nite, whose reflection is partly presented in Exhibit 2-9, is interested in being a flight attendant so that she can experience other parts of the world. Nut, whose reflection is partly shown in Exhibit 2-10, is interested in photography and work in Bangkok.

The rest of the students aspire to pursue careers which are less place-based. These careers include professional soccer players, electricians, and mechanics. The first is highly popular among male students (Figure 2-4). Pu is one of the students who often passionately talks about soccer (Exhibit 2-16). To me, it feels like soccer is beyond a recreational exercise to Pu. His reflection also shows that he has thought about soccer as a career of which will require him to develop other skills alongside his soccer techniques. While his reflection points to Bangkok as a place to pursue his careers, there are also great teams in other provinces across Thailand, which made me put careers in sports in this last category. Aside from sports, other students such as Noey (Exhibit 2-17) are interested in being motorcycle mechanics and technicians. As motorcycles are the main means of commute in this area, some of the students know how to fix, enhance, and decorate motorcycles.

Having opportunities to witness or actively engage with people working in their professions largely affects students' career interests. Other factors include the availability of jobs, facilities, and role models in the area. Additionally, access to technology and media has also allowed students to see more possibilities and explore available opportunities elsewhere.

Exhibit 2-18: Brainstorming session on the 4x4 chart and extracted keywords

Extracted keywords from previous discussions, which are written on post-its.

- *agriculture*
- *natural environment*
- *society*
- *job opportunity and economy*
- *basic infrastructure*
- *communication and technology*
- *not starving*
- *not chaotic*
- *peaceful*
- *being close to loved ones*
- *festivals*
- *sharing*
- *not crowded*
- *sport*
- *sport space*
- *community health centers*
- *internet access*
- *lots of trees*
- *man and nature symbiosis*
- *dams*
- *dryness*
- *drugs*
- *motorbike race*
- *villagers hang out*
- *no customers*
- *forest*
- *flash flood*
- *sitting water*
- *no money*
- *less opportunities*
- *friendly*
- *gambling*
- *agricultural products*
- *low price*
- *low income*
- *forest encroachment*
- *loitering space*
- *education*
- *schools close to home*
- *man-made technology*
- *cellular signal*
- *cellular network*
- *underground water*
- *local products*
- *agricultural jobs*
- *growing vegetables*
- *no logic in buying stuff*
- *no factories*
- *electricity*
- *inconvenience*
- *trash management*
- *littering*
- *land slide*
- *poverty*
- *impoverish*
- *close to*
- *nature*
- *not much pollution*
- *fresh air*
- *dirtiness*
- *broken dam*
- *less development than cities*
- *outdated*
- *technology*
- *windmill*
- *pollution*
- *farm burning*
- *slow wifi*
- *few trash cans*
- *game addiction*
- *no traffic*
- *dirt roads*
- *things close by*
- *broken roads*

Relating existing condition to life decision

Photo explorations and reflections from the previous sections have allowed students to bring up different topics that surround their lives in this area. These topics were recorded in writing as well as in audio transcription. As shown in Exhibit 2-18, I then extracted keywords from the students' written exercises and discussions and had the students arrange them onto a 4x4 chart in the following workshop. The x-axis of the chart represents degrees of challenges (left) to opportunities (right), and the y-axis represents how the topic relates to their life decisions from low (bottom) to high (top). Students also had the choice to add or not use certain keywords that were irrelevant. This workshop was done separately for eighth and ninth graders. Thus there is one diagram from each group of students.

Following the workshop, the diagrams were then digitized and printed for each student to iterate individually based on their personal reasoning (Figure 2-6). Finally, I compiled those iterations together and created Exhibit 2-19 and 2-20, which are presented on the following pages.

Figure 2-6: Example of students' arrangement iteration

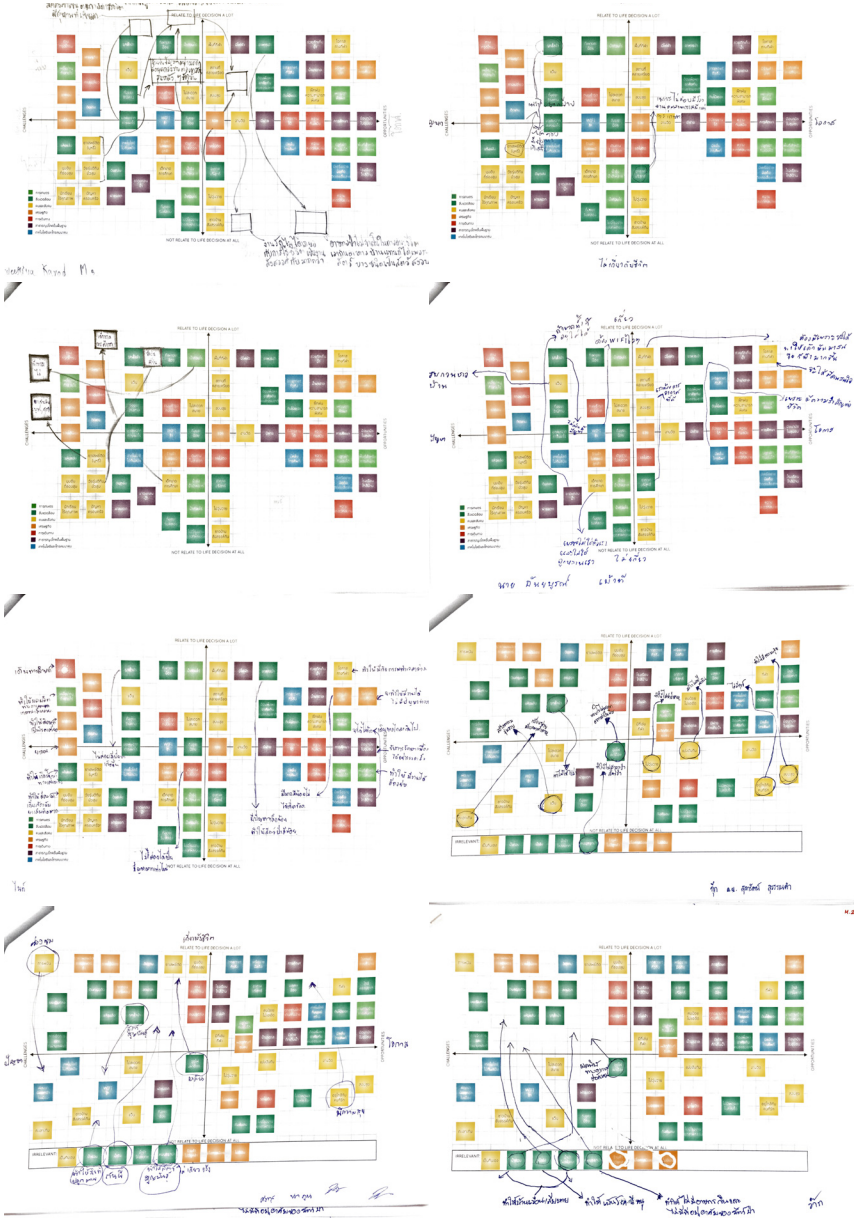


Exhibit 2-19: Result of individual iterations by students in eighth grade

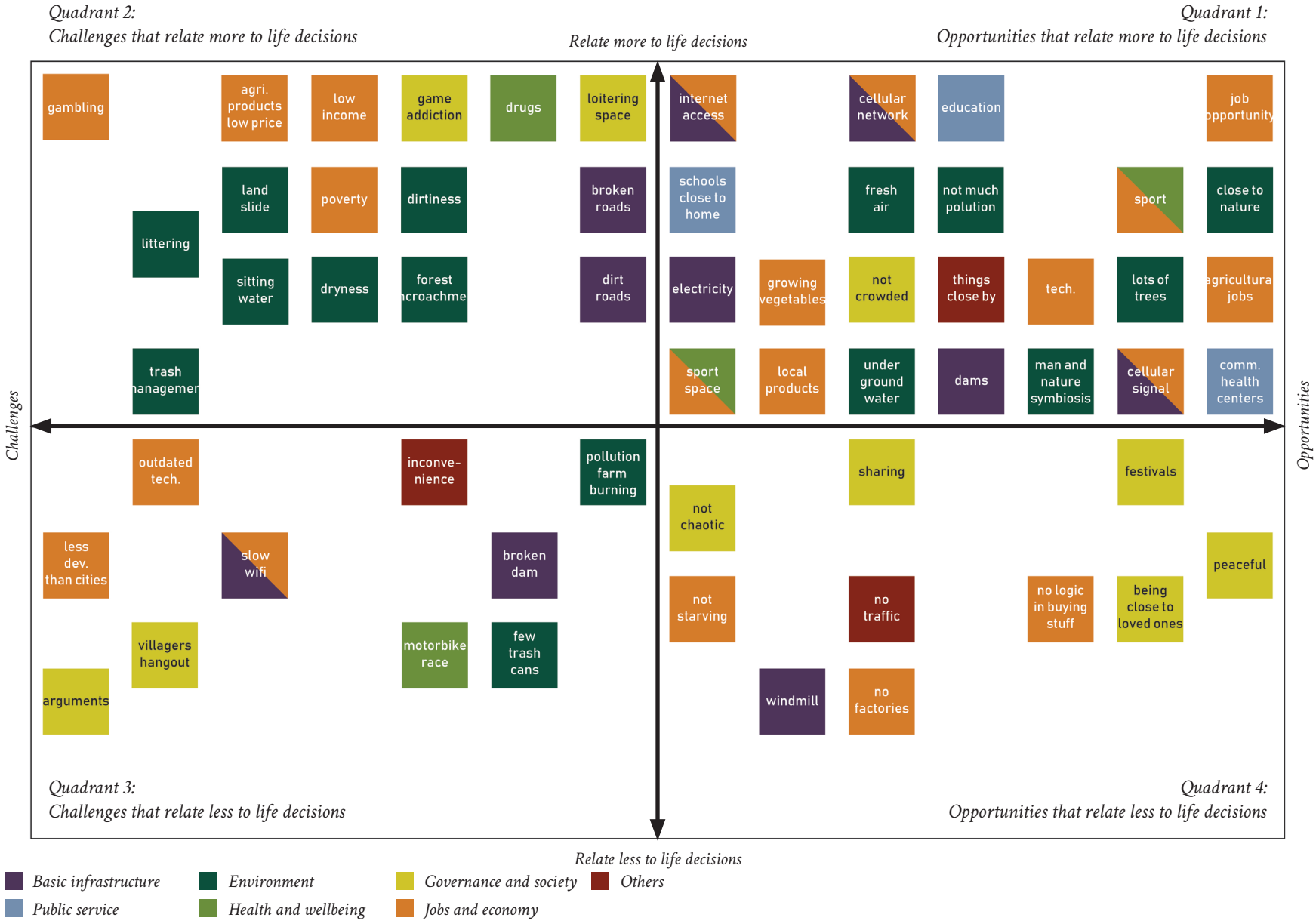
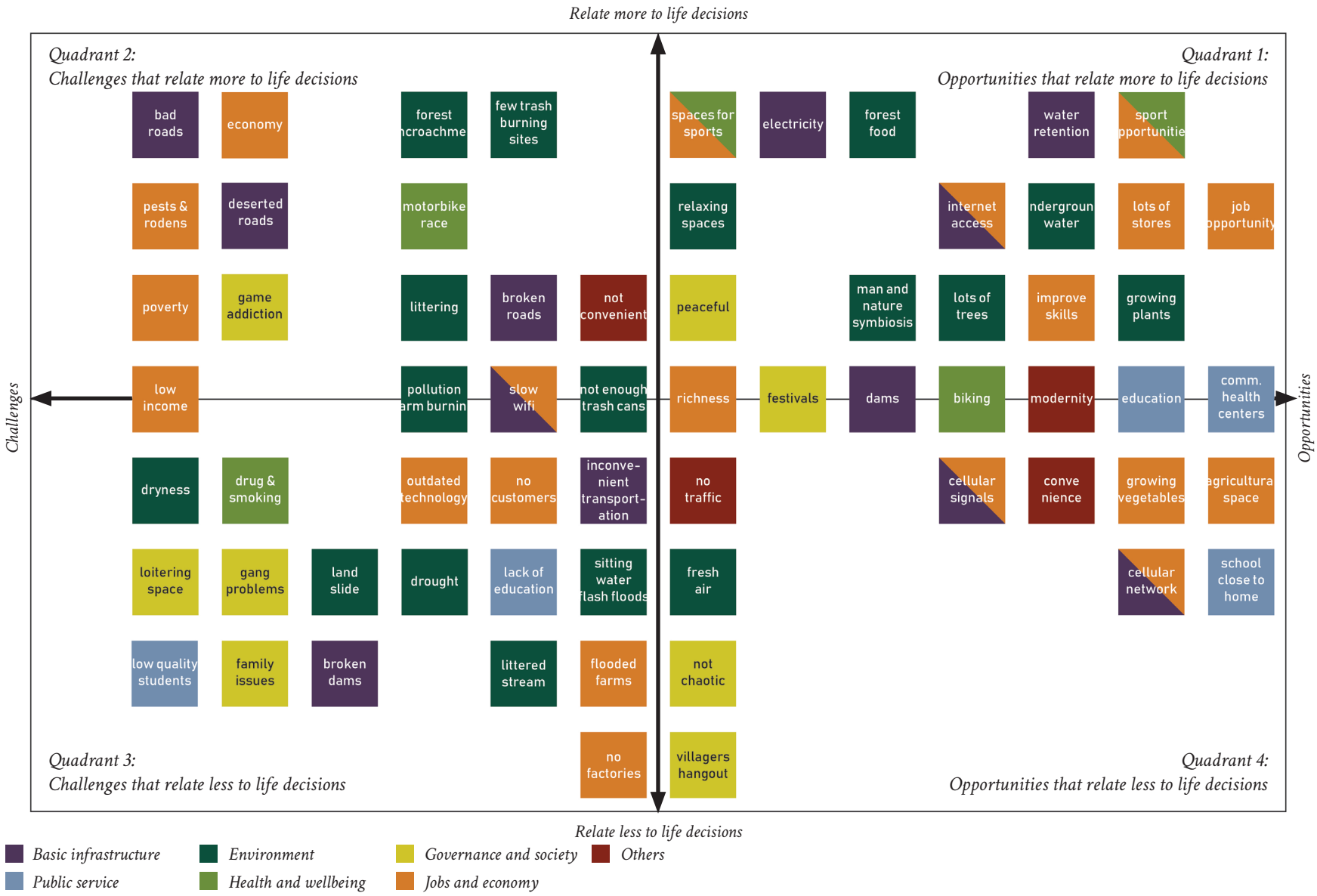


Exhibit 2-20: Result of individual iterations by students in ninth grade



As mentioned earlier, each group of students worked on this workshop separately: the chart done by eighth graders is shown in Exhibit 2-19 and the chart by ninth graders in Exhibit 2-20. Despite the separation, there are some commonalities between the two exhibits which help point to significant topics pertaining to students' life decisions. For the purpose of this research, I will only look at the first and the second quadrant because I am more interested in items that relate to students' life decision.

We can first look at Quadrant 1: Opportunities that relate more to life decision. Items located in the top right corner of the quadrant are the ones which are perceived as most opportune as well as most related to students' life decision. Not surprisingly, job opportunities and sports are both present for the two groups of students. For job opportunities, students see agricultural work as job opportunities in the area. Furthermore, there are also other available jobs such as working with the local government and in health centers. Nonetheless, job opportunity surely is the main item that relates to students' life decision in the near future.

As appeared in the section about students' aspirations, sports emerge again as a significant item to life decisions. Sports cover both space, facilities, and competitions that help influence students' lives. Thus, the sports item has two colors because I was not sure if students see sport more as a career goal (relate to job and economy in orange) or simply as healthy recreation (relate to health and wellbeing in light green).

At the second level of relevance to life decision but are still highly opportune (lower right corner of the first quadrant) are community health centers and being close to nature. Specifically, health centers are highly important in students' perspective, even though they may not necessarily relate to their lives just yet. Thus, items like these are not to be taken for granted. Other interesting factors to point out are internet access and cellular signals and network, which both groups also place into this quadrant. Overall, items that exist in the first quadrant on both charts include the followings:

Basic infrastructure:
electricity, internet access, dams
Public service:
education, community health centers
Environment:
human and nature symbiosis, underground water
Governance and society:
serenity
Jobs and economy:
job opportunities, sports

As for Quadrant 2: Challenges that relate more to life decision, there are common items, but placements of those items are mixed. Thus, we may first look at the recurring items that are placed in the second quadrant to help us analyze common issues.

Basic infrastructure:
dirt road, broken road
Environment:
forest encroachment, littering, trash management
Governance and society:
game addiction
Jobs and economy:

poverty, low income

Items in the categories of jobs and economy, as well as nature and pollution, continue to be the leading factors that relate to student life more. Both groups also see low-income as being an issue in the area, because most agricultural jobs are paid at a minimum wage, and income from agricultural products remains unpredictable. Additionally, natural challenges such as landslides, pests, and rodents add to the unpredictability as they often affect crop yield and subsequently income. Furthermore, students of the two groups also agree on how nature and pollution are challenges that affect their lives.

By analyzing the two quadrants of the chart, I would like to highlight topics that emerged unexpectedly, which include sports, internet access, other social challenges, roads, and pollution.

Sports play a large role in forming students dreams and aspiration. Soccer is a big part of students' community and perhaps in Thai society overall as well. In the evenings after school and on weekends, students and other villagers will gather around the soccer field to play and will only stop when it gets dark. Fathers bring their sons, and teachers will also join in on the games. Sometimes other students also gather to play sepak-takraw, volleyball, or badminton on the school compound. On the weekends, some parents will bring their young children to the kindergarten's playground and have their kids spend time there. As such, the school, in this sense, is also a community center where people of different ages play and hang out. Furthermore, many students start to see sports as a way for them to earn their living because there are opportunities to join local teams, leagues, or become local physical education teachers.

Another topic that has emerged is having internet access and electricity, which is perceived as great opportunities in the area. Nowadays, students' lives revolve around their mobile phones, which has been beneficial for some. Many students use the internet to help them with homework. Some use it to learn new languages and practice them via online messaging. Some students also see that internet access and social media can be a tool for e-commerce which has grown rapidly in Thailand in the past decade. At the same time, students also point to game addiction as a side effect of this opportunity. Many students admit that they are very addicted to games on their phones, which affects their studies and their grades.

The output of this workshop also points to social challenges in the area including smoking, drinking, drugs, and motorcycle racing. These activities are often perceived as problematic especially in youth. While the first three behaviors contribute directly to personal health as well as public health concerns, motorcycle racing is perceived more as a nuisance to the community. Students who race also agree that it creates a lot of noise pollution. Furthermore, they also recognize the risk of racing on public roads which can lead to accidents and fatalities. Many of these issues are recognized by the government as well as villagers and youth themselves. There have been efforts to ameliorate these problems, but they remain

challenging in this area.

With motorcycles as the main mode of transportation, road problems are also significant in students' perception, as potholes and broken roads affect motorcycles more severely than cars or trucks. Dirt roads, on the other hand, are especially problematic with motorcycles because they create a lot of dust. These challenges contribute to the difficulty of getting around and are often linked to the perception of being underdeveloped.

Lastly, as the villages are situated near the national forest, students also acknowledge the importance of nature and their farms' dependency on the health of the natural environment. Many students prefer not to have factories in the vicinity as they often come with pollution and environmental contamination. On the other hand, with many people growing sugarcane on their farms, burning has been a common process for farmers to reap their crops. They usually burn their crops in the evening because the wind is weaker, which makes it easier to control the fire from spreading. At the same time, because crops are often large and are burned in the open, the residues and ashes from these burns are often blown in the air. Everyone jokingly but sadly calls these "black snow."

This issue relates closely to another problem of trash management. Despite students seeing dirtiness and littering as big challenges for them, there is also no mechanism to manage trash aside from burning. While some people segregate plastic bottles to sell them back to recycling plants, other plastics such as wrappers, plastic bags, and other trash are often burned in the open, which produce foul smells. A few students see this as problematic. However, there is also no alternatives for them to get rid of the trash. On the other hand, because the area is very open, many people do not see burning as producing a significant environmental risk.

In all, students have painted a holistic picture of topics around their lives and their categorization of them as challenges or opportunities. Many of these insights align with adults' perception, however, some such as technology, preventing factories, and sports have only emerged through this research workshop. They are insights that government has not thought to address or to use as opportunities for development.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

After much discussion and exploration in various topics in the area, the students had already been thinking a lot about their community. We talked a lot about opportunities, challenges, development, and modernity. Additionally, we also touched upon things that they did not wish to see emerging in this area, which included factories, traffic jams, and pollution. As mentioned in the introduction to the previous chapter, we ended the workshop by producing a photo exhibition at the school. The exhibition itself was a process that helped students summarize and conclude their findings and discussions. Overall, the series of workshops acted as a prompt for students to think more critically about the future of their communities. In other words, the end of the workshop series was the beginning of youth-engaged community development.

The main session that feeds into this policy recommendation chapter was a quick wrap-up exercise after the students' presentation on their photo exhibition. I gave each student a piece of paper and asked them to individually reflect on how they wished to see their communities grow in the future and what were the things they wished to see changed or developed.

Through students' lists of recommendations (Figure 3-1), I tallied each item by topics that emerged. These topics include roads, substance abuse, sports, convenience stores, nature, sources of income, governance, technology, water resources, pollution, education, recreation, health, tourism, and others (Figure 3-2 left). While many of these topics interconnect in different ways, for policy recommendation, I decided to cluster them into six broad categories based on students' angles toward each topic. I then aggregated each topic count to its responding category as shown on the right-hand side of Figure 3-2.

Through the categorical tally, as shown in Figure 3-2, the importance of development categories begins to emerge: the more students talk about the category, the more important the category is. Through the ranking of categories, the most important category is jobs and economy, which is also reflective of what students have pointed out in the opportunity and challenge chart described in the previous chapter. Secondly, basic infrastructure continues to be another important development item, as its development has not yet met villagers' demand. The third is the topic of health and well-being, which gives importance to the development of community health centers and other public health issues including substance abuse and others. The fourth is the environmental issues including enhancing natural environment in the area as well as reducing sources of pollution. The fifth includes offers of public service and the sixth includes issues about governance and society.

Hence, this section will describe the policy recommendation derived from students' input through the six categories and their related topics by their order of importance:

- Jobs and economy
  - Sports
  - Convenience stores
  - Other sources of income and supports
  - Tourism
- Basic infrastructure
  - Roads
  - Water management
  - Technology
- Health and well-being
  - Substance abuse
  - Health
- Environment
  - Nature
  - Pollution
- Public service
  - Education
  - Recreation
- Governance and society
  - Governance
  - Others

Under each of these topics, I will first pull out the items which students wrote on the topic and share my experiences related to such items. Those experiences may be discussions with students, interview dialogues, or casual conversations that occurred while I spent my time in the community. Combining students' requests with my direct experience, I will then offer a policy recommendation to address the topic.

Additionally, these wish lists along with students' discussion and reflection in the previous chapter will also help answer the research sub-questions:

- Do the negative perceptions of rural towns contribute to push their population out of rural areas?
- Do the positive perceptions of rural towns contribute to pull their population to stay put?
- What are the key aspects that will contribute to students' decisions to stay?

Subsequently, answering these sub-questions also helps me answer my main research question of how teenagers in rural areas of Thailand perceive their hometown in relation to their decisions to stay put or migrate to other towns or cities. Thus, this chapter will end by providing answers to these research questions.

This chapter is organized by the category of policy recommendation as followed:

1) jobs and economy,
2) basic infrastructure,
3) health and well-being,
4) environment,
5) public service,
6) governance and society,
7) answering research questions, and
8) policy recommendation summary.

Figure 3-1: Example of students' written work on the question: "How they wish to see their villages become in the future."

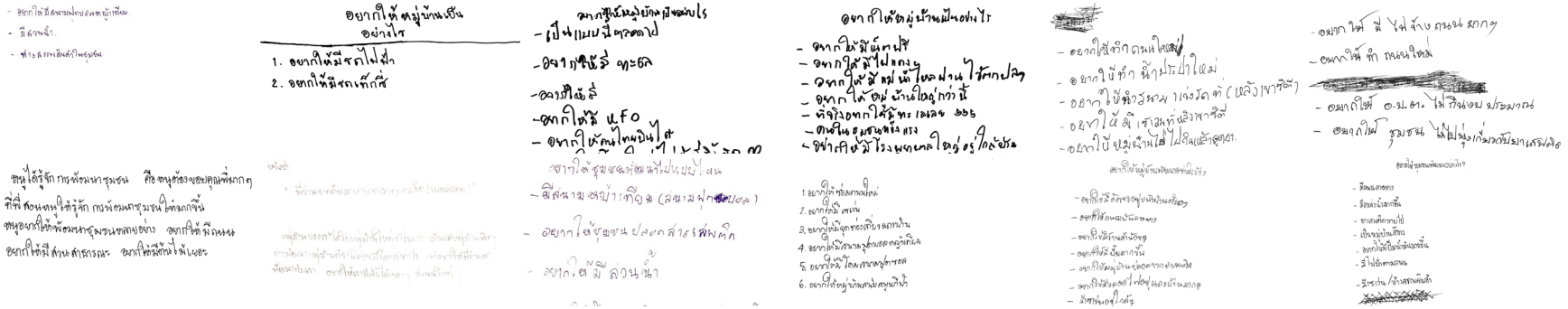


Figure 3-2: Instances of aspiration by topic (left) and by grouped category (right)

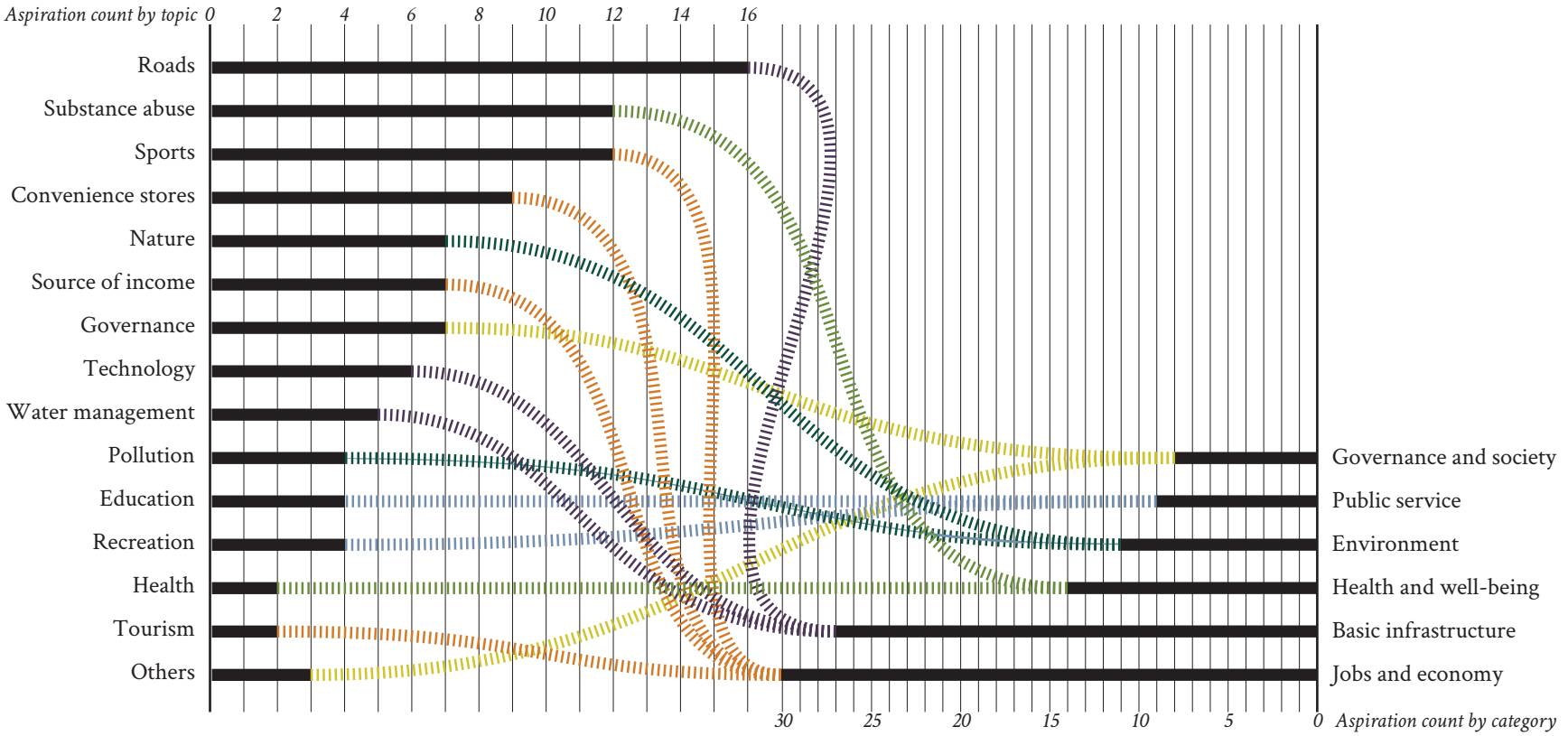


Exhibit 3-1: Sports

- อยากให้มี[redacted]
สนามฟุตบอลใหญ่

I wish for a large soccer stadium.

- อยากให้มีสนามฟุตบอลหญ้าเทียม

I wish for a soccer field made out of aritificial grass.

อยากให้สนามบอลในชุมชน

I wish for a soccer field in the community.

- อยากให้ทำสนามแข่งรถที่ (หลังเขาซิตี้)

I wish for a race track in [Wong Kao Tong].

อยากให้มีสนามหญ้าเทียม

I wish for a soccer field made out of aritificial grass.

- มีสนามหญ้าเทียม (สนามฟุต[redacted]บอล)

I wish for a soccer field made out of aritificial grass.

- อยากให้มีสนามฟุตบอลที่มีสเตเดียม

I wish for a soccer stadium.

4. อยากให้มีสนามฟุตบอลหญ้าเทียม
5. อยากให้มีโดมสนามฟุตซอล
6. อยากให้หมู่บ้านสนับสนุนกีฬา

I wish for a soccer field made out of aritificial grass.

I wish for a soccer stadium.

I wish the village support sports more.

- อยากได้สนามฟุตบอล

I wish for a soccer field.

- อยากให้สนามฟุตบอลมีสเตเดียม

I wish for a soccer stadium.

Exhibit 3-2: Sports | photographed and written by Runchida Mansub (Gib) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

Exercising makes us healthy, gives us opportunities to meet many people such as friends of different ages, improves our skills so that we can make it a career to support ourselves and our families, and prevents us from being sick. It makes us happier and helps build muscles. If there are more sport facilities, villagers and students will be more interested in exercising. I wish there were more support for competitions at every level, so that students are more interested to join, and it also helps prevent them from using illegal substances. And, it also supports youth to have a brighter future. [...] If it becomes a family activity, it will also help build stronger family foundation, relieve stress, build happier relationships, get to sweat, and it is fun.

Exhibit 3-3: Prem showing off his motorcycle moves

Note *For me racing is an opportunity, but for others, if I race in front of their houses, they probably see it as a problem.*

Wan *How do you see it as an opportunity then?*

Note *It's an opportunity to drive fast and to become a racer on a track.*

Wan *Well then, if you want to race in a track, what if there is a track for you to race on?*

Note *I will go there to race.*

Wan *So would you choose racing on a proper track and racing on the street?*

Note *The track.*

Noey *If you're in a track, you will have audiences.*

Note *People who like racing will come watch.*

Jobs and economy

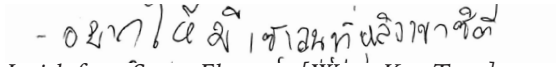
Topics under jobs and economy category include sports, convenience stores, sources of income, and tourism. The diversity of these topics reflects students' career aspiration, but more importantly, it also sheds light on economic development opportunities in the area as well.

Sports

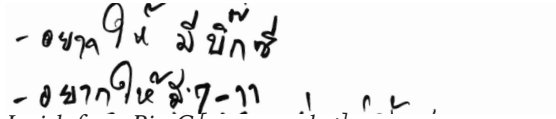
As other topics under this category inherently pertain to jobs and economy, sports may be an odd one out as it is often perceived as relating more to health and well-being. However, I decided to put sports here because students frequently mentioned sports as their professional aspiration and potential source of income rather than just for recreational purposes (Exhibit 3-2 as well as 2-15 and 2-16). Thus, their passion towards sports has engendered the idea that this topic can become an economic development tool as well.

As shown on Exhibit 3-1, many items talk about soccer and one talks about motorcycle racing. Likewise, students also frequently mentioned the two sports throughout the workshop series. Other sports, which were mentioned, included badminton, volleyball, and sepak takraw. Thus,

Exhibit 3-4: Convenience stores

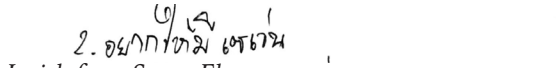


I wish for a Seven-Eleven at [Wong Kao Tong].

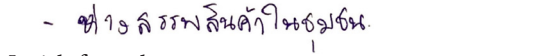


I wish for a Big-C [supermarket].

I wish for a Seven-Eleven.

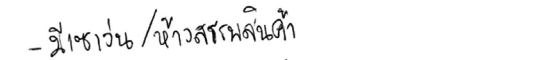


I wish for a Seven-Eleven.

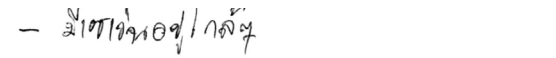


I wish for a department store.

I wish for a Seven-Eleven.



I wish for a Seven-Eleven / a department store.



I wish for a Seven-Eleven nearby.

Exhibit 3-5: A local store in Klong Lan

Student A *I want to have a Seven-Eleven nearby.*

Wan *Why Seven-Eleven? Why not just a regular shop?*

Student A *Well, the stuff there is much more updated. Sometimes in a regular shop, their stuff has already expired and you can tell that it has sat there for a long time because it has become very dusty.*

Student B *There's also air conditioning in Seven-Eleven. It's much cooler in there.*

I see students' interest and serious approach as an opportunity for economic and career development. Through such lens, aside from being professional players, there are also other opportunities around sports including coaches, referees, talent scouts, game analysts, physical therapists, and many more. Specific to motorcycle racing, career opportunities can also include mechanics and technicians. Moreover, local sports events can also indirectly help stir economic activities and other related businesses including jersey shops, garages, and others, the discretion of which means that local business should be the main targeted benefactors.

On the other hand, it is also important to recognize that motorcycle racing is often seen as a nuisance in Thai society—it creates a lot of noise pollution and also relates to gang problems, road accidents, and other unfavorable outcomes. A conversation with Note, who is known to love racing, in Exhibit 3-3 allows me to think differently about racing—that students' interest towards racing is the joy for speedr ather than for other negative activities. Hence, I would suggest that local government should consider officially supporting competitions and racing programs, not only because they can be jobs and income opportunities, but also because they can potentially help focus youth on the positive side of sports and deter them from having to engage in negative activities in order to pursue their interests.

Convenience stores

Despite fresh markets and local stores, many students suggested having a convenience store in their area, specifically Seven-Eleven (Exhibit 3-4), as it is one of the most ubiquitous brands across Thailand. The closest Seven-Eleven is in Klong Lan, which takes about 15 minutes by car or about 20 minutes by motorcycle. Some students also suggested having a large wholesale supermarket and malls in the area. The closest supermarkets are at least an hour away from these villages.

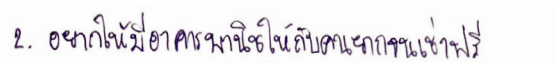
This recommendation suggests several possible underlying issues. One possibility might come from a rapid change in villagers' needs and choices of products that local stores have not been able to catch up with. A second possibility might come from Seven-Eleven's ability to effectively manage their stocks with a variety of shelf-life periods and efficiently update their products to fit local needs. Conversely, local stores without inventory management system often continue to hold dusty products or sometimes expired ones (Exhibit 3-5). Another underlying issue from this recommended item is that Seven-Eleven, supermarkets, and malls may just represent the modern and urban lifestyle that students wished for. They are brightly lit stores that open 24 hours with air-conditioning and updated products, which allow them to easily compete with local stores despite theym providing goods that are more costly.

A key caveat of this students' recommendation is the fact that it excludes local businesses from the process, which we did not have enough time to discuss further this issue. While chain stores often seem to act in partnership, many can turn into a predatory scheme. Consequently, I would suggest that there is a need to better understand the underlying issues for this recommendation. If some of the suggested points I made were true, the findings will further help local government explore ways in which they can help local stores upgrade themselves to this new set of standards made through expectations of local customers.

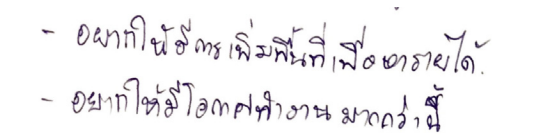
Other sources of income

Under this topic, there are interesting economic development ideas that have emerged from

Exhibit 3-6: Other sources of income

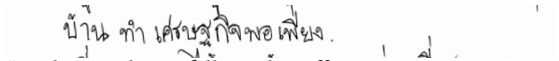


I wish there are rental-free commercial spaces for impoverish people.

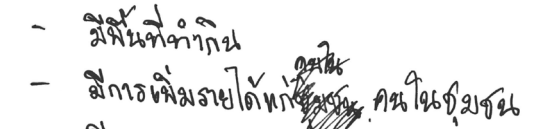


I wish there are more income-generating spaces.
I wish there are more job opportunities.

I wish the community to have more technological advancement.

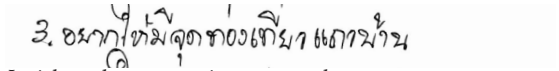


I wish every house follows the sufficiency economy.

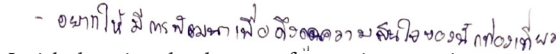


I wish there are income-generating spaces.
I wish villagers can increase their income.

Exhibit 3-8: Tourism



I wish we have a tourist spot nearby.



I wish there is a development for tourist attractions.

Exhibit 3-7: Other sources of income | photographed and written by Pataranit Kamniam (Nite) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

We can cook with these [vegetables], and can pick them up and sell them in front of our houses or at the community market.

students. While a few suggestions shown in Exhibit 3-6 are aspirations broadly wishing for higher income and opportunities, others also suggest more specific economic development tools or supports, which include increasing spaces for income generation, implementing sufficiency economy* (Exhibit 3-7), providing commercial spaces for impoverished people for free, and advancing technologically. Out of these four ideas, one is a development philosophy which has been implemented throughout Thailand for many years, which I will not be going into detail for this research. Instead, here, I will discuss the other three ideas which relate to supporting factors of income generation including space and technology.

As described in the first chapter on the description of place under the topic of jobs and economy, many people who struggle economically tend to be those who do not own land in an area where farm produce is the dominant source of income. The idea of increasing income-generating space can be implemented through a rent subsidization policy. A policy like this could help alleviate rental burdens of farmland for the low-income population. In addition to farmland, rent subsidization can also be implemented through market space as well. This policy can help low-income population gain more access to market space and provide more options for sources of income.

Technology is another supporting factor for local economic development, as it has already been integrated into villagers' lives. While many mainly use the internet to gain access to information and social media, the potential use of it for e-commerce outreaching to new markets has yet been tapped. Furthermore, there are also other financial technology tools, as known as fin-tech, which many do not know about. As technology will become one of the most important factors for economic growth and development of career opportunities in the future, it is also the same for rural areas. Thus, it becomes more important than ever for villagers and local government to proactively learn about online marketplaces and seek for new tools that can answer local needs.

Tourism

As one of the main drivers of Thai economy, both nationally as well as locally, tourism has been the go-to economic development tool for many places in the country. Thus, it is to no surprise that students also thought about tourism as such a tool as well (Exhibit 3-8). While I agree that tourism is an opportunity, which this community, as well as any other, can grasp, my main concern is the challenge to compete with many other tourist sites in Thailand. Moreover, as tourism is largely under the service sector, I would suggest for the government to focus more on other economic development policies that directly empower its population and to develop tourism as a supporting mechanism for those policies.

Summary

- *Support sports through economic development lens.*
- *Empower local store owners to become more competitive with large convenience stores.*
- *Subsidize rent for income-generating spaces.*
- *Tap into available technology including e-commerce and other tools.*
- *Focus on empowering local businesses and career developments while developing tourism more as a supporting mechanism.*

* Sufficiency economy is a philosophy coined by King Rama IX. The promotion of sufficiency economy has largely been through integrative farming among other strategies (Tantivejkul, 2008).

Exhibit 3-8: Roads

– อยากได้ถนนใหม่ๆ

I wish for new roads.

– อยากได้ พัฒนา สภาพ ถนน (หรือทำใหม่

I wish to improve road quality (or reconstruct).

1. อยากได้ ซ่อมถนนใหม่

I wish to build new roads.

3. อยากให้มีสะพานลอย เพื่อลดการเกิดอุบัติเหตุของถนน

I wish there are overpass bridges to help reduce road accidents.

อยากให้มีถนน

I wish for more roads.

ให้ชุมชนของฉันพัฒนา พัฒนา เกี่ยวกับ ความทัน สมัย ถนน

I wish my community develops its modern streets.

- อยากให้ถนนลูกรังเป็นถนนคอนกรีต – ไฟฟ้าตามข้างถนน

I wish dirt roads get turned into concrete.

I wish for more street lights.

- มีถนนลาดยางแทนถนนลูกรัง

I wish dirt roads get turned into asphalt.

– อยากให้มีถนนลาดยาง – อยากให้มีปั๊มมากขึ้น

– อยากให้มีเสาไฟฟ้าแถวบ้านมากๆ

I wish for more asphalt roads.

I wish for more gas stations.

I wish there are more street lights near my house.

- มีถนนลาดยาง
- อยากให้มีปั๊มน้ำมันมากขึ้น
- มีไฟฟ้าตามถนน

I wish for more asphalt roads.

I wish for more gas stations.

I wish there are more street lights.

- อยากให้มีไฟจำนวนมากๆ

- อยากให้ทำถนนใหม่

I wish there are more street lights.

I wish for new roads.

Exhibit 3-9: Dusty roads

Un *The roads are not very convenient. They are very bumpy.*

Ning *They are all very dusty too.*

Pu *All of the roads leading to the mountains are dirt roads. Ho! Riding behind someone is SO dusty.*

Weeks after this conversation students took me up to Yoob-Hua-Chang dam in an evening after school. We were on motorcycles, and I sat on Noey's with my camera as we went up this dirt road. The boys were more playful and they dragged their feet along the road while they were riding. The dust fluttered up in the air and all of us who rode behind them needed to cover our noses with our shirts while cursing at their mischief. Some parts of the dirt road become so sandy that it became hard for Noey and a few others to balance and control their wheels. When we all got back and I walked home, there was so much dust in my hair that it needed to be washed.

Exhibit 3-10: Roads and sugarcane fields

Gloy and I were walking along sthis road in an afternoon as she volunteered to show me around. Sao came on her motorcycle to pick us up because I was running late to a meeting with the village head.

Sao *Aren't you afraid that someone will drag you into the sugarcane field?*

Gloy *No.*

Wan *Has there been such a case though?*

Sao *Not really, but you never know.*

Basic infrastructure

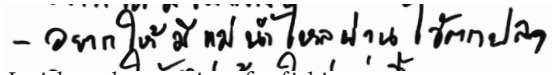
Topics under the basic infrastructure category mainly include roads and water management, which are basic amenities that need continuous development and consistent maintenance. In addition to these conventional basic infrastructures, I have also added technology into this category as it has increasingly become ingrained in people's lives.

Roads

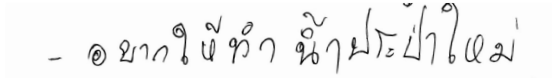
As shown in Exhibit 3-8, there are a couple of main clusters of suggestions under this topic of roads including construction and maintenance, road safety, and other supports for road usage.

The need for road construction and maintenance used to be foreign to me as I had never experienced bad roads on motorcycles before this research took place. As suggested earlier in chapter 1, many streets that connect regionally are well paved and maintained—and they are the same for streets within Ban Phet Mongkhon village. However, the conversation and my experience that followed in Exhibit 3-9 made me understand why this need is most frequently mentioned topic and continues to be the most important for students' lives.

Exhibit 3-11: Water management



I wish we have a river for fishing.



I wish they redevelop the water distribution system.

I wish for more water sources.

I wish for more water retention.

Exhibit 3-12: Yoob-Hua-Chang dam | photographed and written by Sarawut Nakun (Wut) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

This water retention dam is used for agriculture and household usage in the dry season. Villagers who are farmers would bring their e-taks up here with a hose to transfer water into their fields. If plants like corn, cassava, sugarcane, or rice don't get water, they will die. When there is a dam, they can use it for their fields, or fill water tanks and transfer water into the village like a proper water system.

More importantly, however, a couple of students also point out road and pedestrian safety which includes having more traffic lights, street lights, and effective crosswalks. As soon as 7 pm, many streets are pitch dark, and dangers arise when people walk, bike, or ride their e-taks along the sides of the road without any lights or reflective materials. The awareness of road safety has been put largely on drivers but less on the design of the streets to accommodate pedestrians, bikers, or other unusual vehicles. Additionally, as shown in Exhibit 3-10, deserted roads with tall sugarcane on both sides are perceived to be more dangerous as anything or anyone can simply hide behind the thick sugarcane fields.

Despite students' complaints on high gas price, they also request more gas stations in the area, which already has a few gas stores using siphoning method and a few gas vending stations. This request shows students' dependency on using gas-run vehicles. Corresponding to such observation, the idea of walking or biking as means of transportation did not come up in the workshop at all. While the three villages surrounding Ban Phet Mongkhon School are only about 2 kilometers apart, rarely did I see people walking from one place to another.

A possible explanation to this issue may be that roads are not thought of to contain other activities than driving. Consequently, while road construction and maintenance should continue to be parts of basic infrastructure development, I would suggest that the design of new roads should begin to incorporate other usages and vehicles, which may include walking, jogging, biking, e-taks, motorcycles, trucks, and others.

Water management

Most of the items under this topic are requests for more water storage system (Exhibit 3-11). The topic of drought often came up when we talk about challenges in the area, because it relates both to their daily lives as well as their agricultural products, which are their main sources of income (Exhibit 3-12). I became curious and decided to ask students about how dry this area actually gets—if they ever have to go on a day without running water. They replied that such has never been the case, and the worst situation in the area is when water runs sparingly, which means that students have to be more careful using water. Thus, the continual development of water infrastructure has been somewhat effective, yet it needs to continue into the future.

On the other hand, students have also mentioned farming issues related to broken dams, which sometimes are caused by flash floods from higher ground. In addition to broken dams which eliminate their ability to store water, the flash floods sometimes also destroy farms and their products as well.

Water management in this area is a challenge, especially because the land is comprised largely of sandy soil, which allows water to seep through more rapidly. Aside from creating ponds and other water retention systems, it might also be worthwhile to think about creating ecosystems around ponds and dams to help to maintain soil moisture, thus improve the soil's water retention ability.

Technology

Admittedly, putting technology and free Wi-Fi under basic infrastructure (Exhibit 3-13) can be questionable considering how road development and water supply in some areas are still lacking. However, as more information today has largely been distributed through websites and mobile applications, access to the internet can also equate to access to information

Exhibit 3-13: Technology

- อยากให้มี wifi ตามหมู่บ้าน

I wish there's Wi-Fi throughout the villages.

- อยากให้มี wifi ทั่วหมู่บ้าน

I wish there's Wi-Fi throughout the villages.

- อยากให้มีเน็ตฟรี

I wish there's free internet.

Exhibit 3-14: A food shack with free Wi-Fi

Sao	*Ho, you also have free Wi-Fi here?*
Store owner	*Haha, yes! We just got a new promotional plan and we were going to cancel our extra one. But then it takes a couple of months before the contract ends, so we decided to share it out.*

Exhibit 3-15: Cellular towers | photographed and written by Pornjarat Tunpirat (Un) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

Internet access has a lot of benefits for the villagers in different ways such as education and communication, which makes lives more convenient. It also provides access to games and other entertainment media which are good for relaxation. However, if it is not used right, people can get too addicted to the internet. We can lose time for school and for work. Furthermore, it can also be harmful for health as well as wasteful from having to pay for the service fees.

and services. Hence, in many ways, providing access to the internet to everyone in the community also supports other development agenda including education, economic development, and others. Furthermore, technology has already entered the community and demand for internet access is already here (Exhibit 3-14).

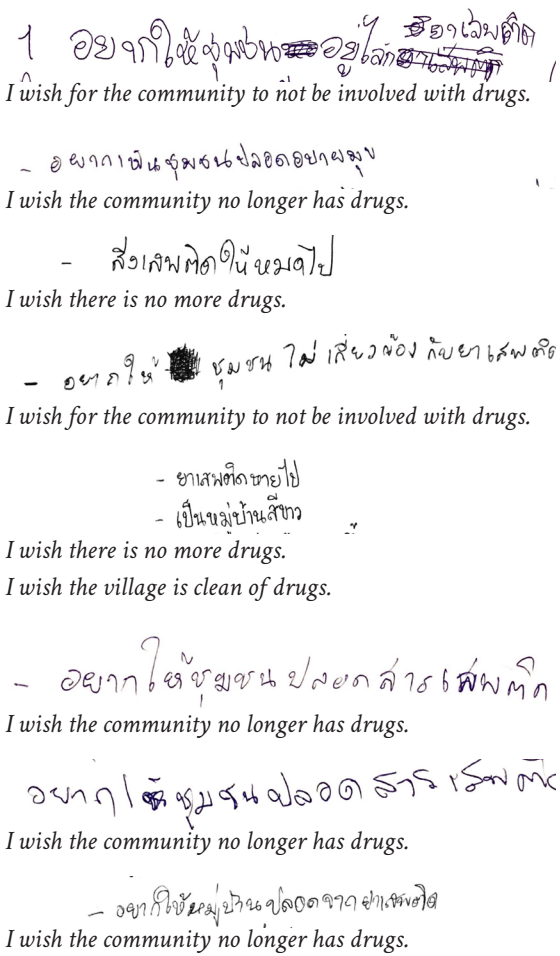
Ban Phet Mongkhon School currently provides free Wi-Fi for its students and nearby villagers. Towards the end of my stay in the village, when my data plan had ended, the school's free Wi-Fi was not only a luxury for me, but also helped me save money for a new plan. Furthermore, I have also noticed that on holidays and weekends, students would come to sit around internet hotspots in the school to play online games with their friends.

Consequently, the main benefits of having free Wi-Fi as a public service are to help reduce individual expenses on the costs of internet access, to provide access to information, and thus also support economic development in the area. However, free internet connection can still be a contentious issue as it has never been thought of as basic amenities before in Thailand. Furthermore, the benefit or harm of it highly depends on individual usage, as described in Exhibit 3-15. Thus, I would suggest for villagers to form groups and share an internet plan, the cost of which can be subsidized by the government to a certain extent. This first step will allow the government to test out whether internet access has more positive or negative impacts towards people in the area.

Summary

- *Continue to work on road maintenance, however, consider and incorporate other usages and vehicles for new road construction, as a way to increase road safety as well as to support other modes of transportation.*
- *Continue to work on water management system, and consider building an ecosystem around water ponds and river to help address the soil's ability to retain surface and underground water.*
- *Start building internet sharing systems to test out if free Wi-Fi should be implemented in the area.*

Exhibit 3-16: Substance abuse



I wish for the community to not be involved with drugs.

I wish the community no longer has drugs.

I wish there is no more drugs.

I wish for the community to not be involved with drugs.

I wish there is no more drugs.
I wish the village is clean of drugs.

I wish the community no longer has drugs.

I wish the community no longer has drugs.

I wish the community no longer has drugs.

Exhibit 3-17: Drugs and law enforcement

In a workshop, I asked students if they knew the people who used drugs, and they said yes. Weeks later, when I had the chance to interview the head of Ban Phet Charoen (moo 3), Wirat Sopimpa, I decided to bring this topic up as well.

Wan *So I have asked students, and they said they know who use drugs.*

Wirat *Yes, this is the problem. Law enforcement is not strict.*

Wan *What if we just tell the police, what would they do?*

Wirat *The police won't have any proof to arrest these people. They know who uses drugs, but without proof, if they are caught, the sentence is very light.*

Sao *They will be out in no time.*

Wirat *Yes, they will be out in no time.*

Exhibit 3-18: Loitering space | photographed and written by Rathikarn Peungdee (Ning) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

This spot seems like nothing at a glance, but it is a loitering space for youths to hang out, drink, and smoke. At night there are drugs, alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes. There are both boys and girls here. Sometimes I pass the spot at around 5-6 p.m. and will see youths loitering.

Health and well-being

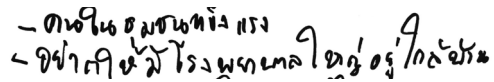
Topics under this category, as shown in Exhibit 3-16, largely relate to substance abuse, which includes the use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. In addition to this big issue, the topic of health was also brought up more broadly as well.

Substance abuse

The term "addictive drug," a direct translation from Thai, is commonly used to refer to illegal drugs in general. With this connotation, when students mentioned that there are a lot of "addictive drugs" at the school while showing me a picture of a cigarette butt, I had to ask them explicitly what they meant by such term. Fortunately, they said that the term for them also encompasses drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, which concerns them more than actual illegal drug abuse as drug abuse has continued to decline in the area. Despite the misconception of this terminology, some of the students knew people in the villages who used drugs and where abusers gather (Exhibit 3-18).

Drug manufacturing, trafficking, and addiction

Exhibit 3-19: Health



I wish for good health for villagers.
I wish there is a large hospital near our village.

Exhibit 3-20: Smoking | photographed and written by Rathikarn Peungdee (Ning) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

Most people know the harms of smoking, but they still smoke? It is a question without a clear answer. Youth often belief that smoking is a cool thing to do. Some just want to try it, and some just want to relax. When they smoke more, they become more addicted to it and eventually cannot stop. More and more people smoke, and the number of deaths related to smoking has risen. I want people to quit smoking, because there is nothing good in it and it is more harmful for the surrounding people. I am a person who has lost a loved one due to smoking. He was my uncle who had emphysema, and he was hospitalized for it. He could not get out of his bed. Not for long, his emphysema overinflated and he died immediately. It was a painful death, and I do not want to see it happening to anyone else. Please stop smoking.

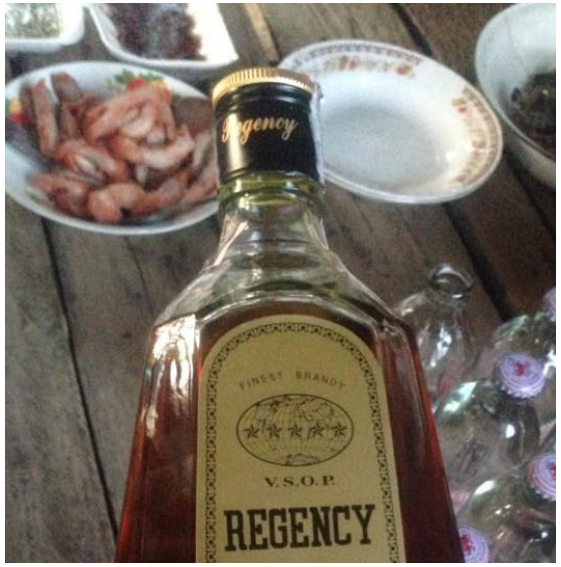


Exhibit 3-21: Drinking | photographed and written by Rathikarn Peungdee (Ning) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

Drinking and socializing helps bring family together and helps build more friendship. For example, during ordination ceremonies or weddings. However, if we consume more than our bodies can take, intoxication may cause fights and assaults, people may become more boisterous and annoy the surrounding neighbors, or intoxication can also cause road accidents.

have been an issue across Thailand for decades. Thus, governments have continued to prioritize their efforts to get rid of drugs within communities throughout the country. The fact that students acknowledged this issue as an important topic also shows a success in building awareness amongst youth and other vulnerable populations, who are often targeted by drug traffickers. Additionally, as described in the first chapter, the Sub-District Administrative Office also holds support groups, rehabilitation programs, and career development courses to help former drug users return to their normal lives. While awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs have been effective, law enforcement is perceived as being inefficient with drug sellers, as shown in Exhibit 3-17.

In addition to drug abuse, students also pointed to smoking and drinking as unhealthy habits (Exhibit 3-20 and 3-21). While there are campaign signs against such behaviors, they often project moral reasoning rather than a personal health issue. Thus, I would suggest that similar support groups and rehabilitation programs can also help alcoholics and smoking addicts overcome their challenges to quit as well.

Health

While substance abuse seems to be the main health concern in the area, as they relate closely to other social issues such as domestic abuse, road accidents, and gang problems, a student also would like to see villagers having good health (Exhibit 3-19). The same student also mentioned that there should be a hospital nearby the community, which is an interesting request as there are two hospitals are less than 10 kilometers away. Thus, this topic will need to be further investigated.

Summary

- *Continue the awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs for drug addicts.*
- *Create other rehabilitation programs to help alcoholics and smoking addicts as well.*

Exhibit 3-22: Environment

- อยากให้มีธรรมชาติมากขึ้น

I wish it is more natural.

- มีป่ามากขึ้น

I wish for more forest area.

และอยากให้มีต้นไม้เยอะๆ อุดมสมบูรณ์.

I wish for more trees and enriched nature.

อยากให้มีธรรมชาติ มากขึ้น

I wish it is more natural.

อยากให้เรามีต้นไม้เยอะๆ

I wish for more trees.

อยากให้มีสวนสาธารณะ อยากให้มีต้นไม้เยอะ

I wish we have a park, and I wish for more trees.

- อยากให้มีความเป็นธรรมชาติมากขึ้น

I wish it is more natural.

Exhibit 3-23: Richness of the forest | photographed and written by Weeriya Karod (Gloy) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

The richer the forest is, the better the villagers' livelihood will become. This is because the forest area is the source of water and food. If the forest is rich in its ecosystem, there will also be more wild animals and there will be more water resources, which will then benefit farmers.

Exhibit 3-24: Border of national forest

Gloy That's the national forestry sign.

I looked over at the wooden white sign which says "National Forest Area". It was hung on a loosely-made barbwire fence.

Wan So beyond that, it's the national forest area?

Gloy Yes.

We were unable to go beyond the fence, but at the edges I could hear the distinct sounds of the forest. I could hear birds conversing among themselves somewhere inside. The sound was soothing yet the forest felt forbidden and guarded. It was my first time seeing the forest from the outside of a side fence—it made me feel so close but yet so far. I think I now understand why students want more trees and more forests despite their close proximity to the border of national forest.

Environment

Topics which relate to the environment include nature and pollution. Items that fall under the topic of nature relate mostly to enriching natural environment in the area (Exhibit 3-22). On the other hand, there are two issues under pollution: trash management and crop burning.

Nature

Throughout the workshop, students continued to acknowledge the beauty and the importance of their surrounding natural environment which relates to their rural lifestyle (Exhibit 3-23). It was very interesting to see that having more trees and more forest areas are one of the development priorities (Exhibit 3-22), which students have raised, despite the fact that their villages are right next to the border of a national forest.

A possible underlying issue can be that locating next to natural environment does not necessarily equate to the accessibility of such areas, as I have described in Exhibit 3-24. Furthermore, the entrance to the Mae

Exhibit 3-25: Pollution

- อยากให้มีถังขยะอยู่หน้าบ้านตัวเอง

I wish there is a trash can in front of my house.

- ลดการเผาอ้อย
- อยากให้มีถังขยะ

I wish there is a reduction in sugarcane burning.
I wish there are more trash cans.

6) หยุดการเผาอ้อย

I wish people stop burning their crops.

Exhibit 3-26: Income-generating land | photographed and written by Sarawut Nakun (Wut) for the end-of-workshop photo exhibition

It is an income-generating land for villagers, which is also their main source of income because many people work in the agriculture sector. These farms may include casava, corn, and sugarcane. Despite the land being the main source of income for villagers, [farming] also has many negative impacts. The soil surface often becomes less nutritious as sugarcane fields require a lot of chemical fertilizers. Furthermore, when farmers finish reaping sugarcane, they would burn down the fields, which create air pollution as well as further destroy the soil quality.

Wong National Forest is about 30 kilometers away from the school, and it takes another 30 kilometers up the winding road to the ridge of the mountain. Hence, many students have never been there because it is much harder for them to ride motorcycles up the steep road. The difficulty in entering the national forest further confirms the inaccessibility to the natural environment.

Thus, while natural forest should continue to be reserved, I would suggest that the government should prioritize natural integration into planning and development of various spaces in the community, which may include roads, markets, and temples. Simple road-side plants, gardening, parks, or reforestation can be integrated into the design, which further helps make such spaces more inclusive as well.

Pollution

There are two issues on the topic of pollution: one has to do with trash management, and another has to do with burning sugarcane crops (Exhibit 3-25).

As I spent time living in the village, I rarely saw littered trash around. Furthermore, I also noticed that most people segregate plastic bottles to be sold separately to recycling plants. Despite this acknowledgment, I noticed that other types of plastic such as wrappers, plastic bags, straws, and others, are not yet segregated as recyclable materials. Thus, they often get burned. On every afternoon at around 3-4 pm, the school's janitor would start burning the trash at the dump site behind the school's building. Despite students' suggestions of having more trash cans as a way to help address trash issues in the area, the topic of reducing wastes or other types of waste management has never come up in the workshop. In response to students' acknowledgment of trash issues, I would instead suggest the government to start campaigning for a reduction of wastes, especially those that cannot be recycled and become toxic when they are burned. Those may include plastic bags, plastic straws, and others.

Crop burning has also been an on-going issue nation-wide. It is believed to be the cause of smog in many northern provinces, where there are plenty of sugarcane crops. Although the topic has been discussed quite frequently throughout the workshop, only a couple of students saw it as an issue which needs to be addressed. The residue of such conflagration is often referred to as "black snow," which often makes me feel uneasy because it normalizes a serious environmental and public health issue. Thus, through students' input, I would recommend the government to start educating farmers on the long-term cost of burning their crops, which affects directly affect their farms, which are their source of income (Exhibit 3-26).

Summary

- *Include natural integration into new spatial development and develop a long-term environmental restoration in the area.*
- *Campaign for waste reduction in addition to the current recycling and reusing programs.*
- *Educate farmers about the long-term financial impact of crop burning and using too much chemical fertilizers.*

Exhibit 3-27: Education

1 อยากให้มีมหาลัยมากกว่านี้

I wish there are more colleges.

1. อยากให้มีมหาลัยมากกว่านี้

I wish there are more colleges.

- อยากเห็นเด็กในชุมชนมีการศึกษาและอนาคตที่ดี

I wish to see younger children in the community having good education and better future.

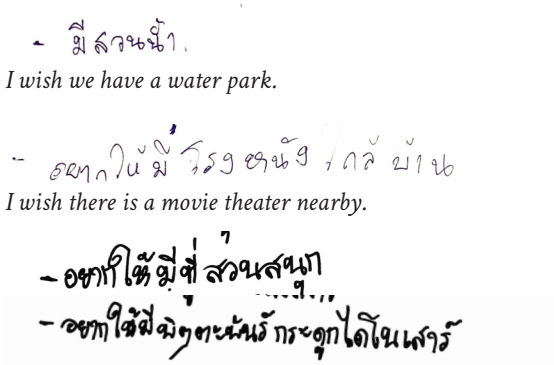
- อยากให้มีศูนย์เลี้ยงสัตว์

I wish for an animal center.

Exhibit 3-28: Library at the school

Exhibit 3-29: Chicken coop at the school

Exhibit 3-30: Recreation



I wish we have a water park.

I wish there is a movie theater nearby.

I wish we have an amusement park.
I wish we have a dinosaur museum.

Public service

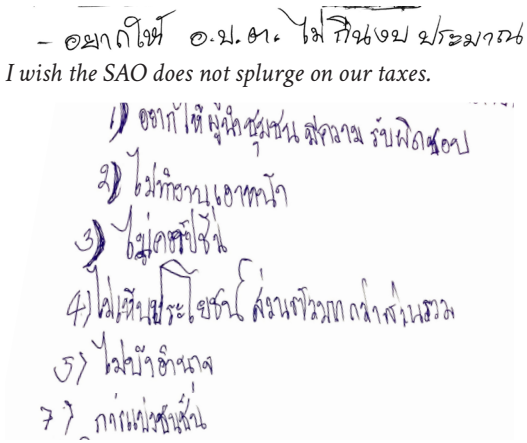
The two topics that I categorized under Public services are education (Exhibit 3-27) and other recreational facilities (Exhibit 3-30). Because this category is relatively small compared to other ones, I will discuss the two items together.

A few students see how education relates to better job opportunities and their future outlook; thus they wished there were more universities closer to the area as well as educational opportunities for the younger generation. On the other hand, education facilities do not only refer to schools but also museums and other learning centers—in this case, an animal center. Interestingly, the school has some of the related facilities including a library (Exhibit 3-28) and a chicken coop (Exhibit 3-29), which is part of the agriculture class of the national curriculum. Furthermore, eggs produced in this coop get used for school lunches as well. A center like this helps bridge learning in schools to relevant skills students need in the future. Additionally, students also mentioned water parks, amusement parks, movie theaters, and other recreational spaces. Thus, aside from education which is already an available service in the area, adding other modes and topics of learning opportunities may be an interesting approach to empower the local population and help add skills they need to find more job opportunities.

Summary

- *Leverage existing facilities, such as the school, to create additional learning opportunities for the local population.*

Exhibit 3-31: Governance



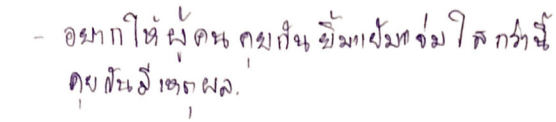
I wish the SAO does not splurge on our taxes.

I wish for responsible community leaders,
[who] do not just work for their reputation,
are not corrupted,
see community's benefits above their own,
do not [falsely exercise their power, and]
do not discriminate.

Exhibit 3-32: Road construction sign being left there after the construction is finished

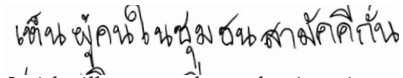
Wan	*I wonder about these signs, when the constructions end do they take them out?*
Everyone	*No.*
Wut	*They would just get rusted and rotten there on the spot.*
Un	*I don't understand why they have to write it. They write about the budget costs.*
Big	*Showing off.*

Exhibit 3-33: Others - society related



I wish people are more friendly, talk to each other nicely and reasonably.

I wish there is equal opportunity for everyone.



I wish villagers work together in unity.

Governance and society

Many of the items in this category are the least expected because students have rarely mentioned these before throughout the workshop. The most comments which were put under this category look for accountability of the local government, which include governance structure, corruption, equality, and equity, as shown in Exhibit 3-31. Furthermore, as many positions in the government are filled by locally elected officials, many leave their projects' construction signs alongside the finished site, so that villagers can recognize their contribution and potentially re-elect them again (Exhibit 3-32). While I agree with students that these items are a waste in budget spending and leave visual pollution for this community, I also see the importance of providing information during the construction period. My suggestion towards the government is to become more transparent in their projects through their website or virtually displayed on a screen at the SAO.

Additionally, some students also mentioned wanting to see villagers become more united, and have better relationships with each other (Exhibit 3-33). In thinking about transparency and accountability along the line of unity and relationship building, I would suggest that participation in the policymaking process will make a big difference in creating trust to the government as well as trust amongst the villagers. Furthermore, the engagement will also allow villagers to know politicians and civil servants personally, to voice their concerns and suggestions directly, as well as to understand the constraints that the government may have towards certain projects.

Summary

- *Be more transparent in the budgetary and project information, so that villagers can check how their tax is spent.*
- *Integrate participatory processes into policymaking it is an empowerment tool as well as allowing the government to gain local insights. Furthermore, these processes also help build relationships and trusts.*

Answering research questions

The workshops have revealed much about students' perceptions of their hometown as well as how they see it being developed in the future. From the discussions and activities that I did with students, there are multiple contributing factors to students' decisions to stay put or migrate in the future.

Sub-question 1: Do the negative perceptions of rural towns contribute to pushing its population out of rural areas?

Negative perceptions of rural towns do not directly push students out of their hometowns. Despite students' acknowledgment of various local challenges, much of the basic services and infrastructure are available in their hometown. Thus, the challenges that students have mentioned concentrate more on enhancing the quality of available services and expanding the coverage of existing basic infrastructure.

Conversely, positive perception of cities has a stronger incentive to pull rural population in. Cities remain attractive for some students as they are often perceived as more modern, more advanced, and more convenient. These perceptions attribute to students' aspiration to move into cities where more opportunities are available for education, career choices, and their aspired lifestyles.

Thus, students who may prefer to move into cities tend to look for 1) education and career opportunities that do not exist in their hometown, 2) an exploration of living in cities and expand their social networks, and 3) a more modern lifestyle which is perceived to be more convenient.

Sub-question 2: Do the positive perceptions of rural towns contribute to pulling its population to stay put?

Positive perceptions of rural towns can contribute to pulling students to stay put. The serene environment and simple lifestyle in rural villages such as these in Tambon Pang Tawai, Amphoe Pang Sila Tong, Kampaengphet are the key factors which students cherish and wish to see enhanced. Furthermore, the availability of careers related to agriculture and forestry also attract certain students whose interests lie in those sectors. Other available careers such as teachers, civil servants, and health care providers also provide options for students who may want to stay put but are interested in careers other than farming. Furthermore, because farming is often seasonal, many villagers are also engaged in different jobs in their free time including other farming services,

construction, health services, etc.

Additionally, internet access and other technological expansion to rural areas have also helped to address gaps between rural and urban divides. Some of the gaps include access to information and access to online marketplaces through e-commerce and social media. Thus, such accessibility can help balance out cities' attractiveness in some aspects and help build positive perceptions in rural areas, which can further enhance the attractiveness of living in rural areas.

Sub-question 3: What are the key aspects that will contribute to their decisions to stay?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the key aspects that will contribute to their lives include the availability of diverse career opportunities and sources of income, enhancing basic infrastructure and incorporating new demands for internet access, and to holistically support well-being through personal health and the environment. Support of these policy recommendations may not necessarily re-incentivize people who prefer a more urban lifestyle to remain in rural areas. However, they will help address gaps between rural and urban divides which can help equate the pros and cons of moving. In other words, these policy recommendations can help shape rural-urban migration to become more of a lifestyle choice rather than a necessary move.

The main research question:

How do teenagers in rural areas of Thailand perceive their hometown in relation to their decision to stay put or migrate to other towns or cities?

The findings above provide critical answers to the research question of this study. There are three concepts which play large roles in students' decisions to stay put or migrate to other towns or cities: 1) career interests and income sources, 2) convenient and modern lifestyles, and 3) serenity and simple lifestyles.

The first is their career interests and the limitation of income sources in their hometown. Students' interests in agriculture, horticulture, or forestry align best with local career opportunities. On the other hand, other career interests, including being a flight attendant or working in the movie industry, simply do not exist in rural areas. Thus, those students tend to see themselves thriving in larger cities, especially in Bangkok. Somewhere in between are careers in the service sector such as mechanics or electricians, which highly depend upon higher demand through the densely populated places in cities. However, because they are basic services that most communities need, people interested in these careers have more flexibility to choose their locations. Several other career interests such as becoming teachers, nurses, or public servants in governmental offices will depend on where they get assigned. Most of the jobs often fall in rural areas, but whether or not that area will be there hometown, depends largely on each ministry's system. Careers such as these are also similar to careers in sports as the placement will depend largely on which teams people get signed into.

The second is the idea of convenient and modern lifestyle. Students talked about these

two concepts a lot, and they related largely to technological advances, access to information, as well as transit systems and having a myriad of options at hand for shopping and other activities. While technological advances and access to information reflect the gap between urban and rural livelihoods in Thailand, having lived in Bangkok my whole life, other perceptions such as convenience often ignore certain realities including traffic congestion and higher cost of living. Transit systems, taxis, buses, and other transportation options, have not yet been able to compensate for traffic congestion in Bangkok. Thus, in an equal distance which takes 15 minutes in a rural area can take up to an hour or more in Bangkok. Some students have already mentioned congestion as one of the aspects they do not want. Additionally, it is true to a certain extent that there are more options in Bangkok to fit individual needs. However, the cost of living is much higher in Bangkok that it may limits a lot of people's choices down despite the availability of those items. On the other hand, technological advances have already begun to reach out to various rural areas. Furthermore, technology has also increased access to information for the rural population. Thus, it is difficult to gauge how the factor of convenience and modern lifestyle will play out for the students.

The last is the serene environment in students' rural hometown. With fewer people and less density in the area, many students like how it is more relaxed and calmer in their hometown. Additionally, it also relates to the proximity to nature and openness. The peaceful serenity is one of the most significant values that students see in their hometown, and thus make many want to stay put as well.

Policy recommendation summary

Jobs and economy

1. Support sports through an economic and career development lens in addition to health and well-being.
2. Empower local store owners to become more competitive with large convenience stores.
3. Subsidize rent for income-generating spaces, which may include farmland and market space.
4. Tap into available online technology including e-commerce and other tools that can serve local needs.
5. Focus on empowering local businesses and career developments while developing tourism more as a supporting mechanism.

Basic infrastructure

6. Continue to work on road maintenance, however, consider and incorporate other usages and vehicles for new road construction, as a way to increase road safety as well as to support other modes of transportation.
7. Continue to work on water management system, and consider building an ecosystem around water ponds and river to help address the soil's ability to retain surface and underground water.
8. Start building internet sharing systems to test out if free Wi-Fi should be implemented in the area.

Health and well-being

9. Continue the awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs for drug addicts.
10. Create other rehabilitation programs to help alcoholics and smoking addicts as well.

Environment

11. Include natural integration into new spatial development and develop a long-term environmental restoration in the area.
12. Campaign for waste reduction in addition to the current recycling and reusing programs.
13. Educate farmers about the long-term financial impact of crop burning and using too much chemical fertilizers.

Public service

14. Leverage existing facilities, such as the school, to create additional learning opportunities for the local population.

Governance and society

15. Be more transparent in the budgetary and project information, so that villagers can check how their tax is spent.
16. Integrate participatory processes into policymaking it is an empowerment tool as well as allowing the government to gain local insights. Furthermore, these processes also help build relationships and trusts.

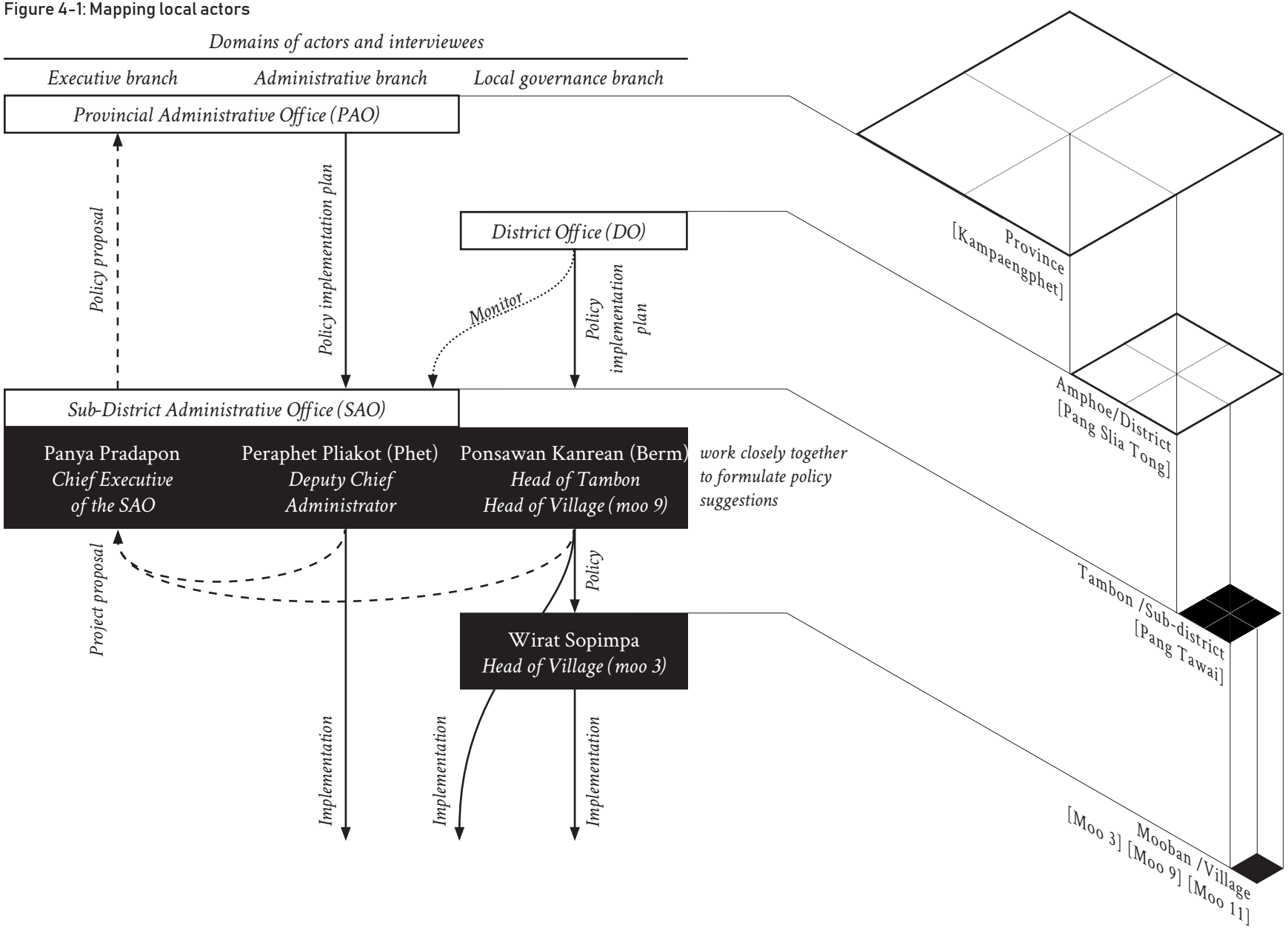
POLICY COMPARISON

The benefits of new policy recommendations can help address some of the pain points and incentives which relate to rural-urban migration. Furthermore, they can also help address the brain drain phenomenon in rural towns. However, to drive the recommendations into implementation, it is important to engage local actors and policymakers. While there are local policy-making processes, they rarely look at youths' perception towards development, despite the fact that youth today will soon become key drivers to sustain rural towns in the future. Thus, it is important to compare the new recommendation from the research to existing policies to see where the alignment and the divergence are. Furthermore, I will also try to see how new policy can be implemented under the existing framework.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the spatial scope that relates most to policy proposal and implementation is the jurisdiction boundary at the sub-district level – tambon. As the Sub-District Administrative Office (SAO) is the main office at the tambon level, this chapter will base its analysis on the SAO's budget report and strategic plan. Therefore, this chapter will first map local actors to introduce some of the actors which I interviewed and had conversations with, which will be referenced throughout this chapter. Secondly, I will then show the SAO 2017 budget report as well as the 2018 strategic plan and point out some of the key observations from them. Lastly, I will go through the new policy recommendations and compare them with the existing SAO's plan. In other words, this chapter is organized into 3 sections:

1) mapping local actors,
2) past implementatioin and future plans, and
3) policy comparison.

Figure 4-1: Mapping local actors



Mapping local actors

In local governance, there are three domains of actors: the executive branch, the administrative branch, and the local governance branch. These branches work together both to propose policies as well as to implement them locally. At Tambon Pang Tawai, the actors in policy making and implementation, whom I had the chance to interview, are shown in Figure 4-1. The Sub-District Administrative Office (SAO) (Figure 4-2) is the main civil servant office at the tambon level, and is also the office which has provided many documents referred to in this research.

In a conversation with Peraphet Pliakod (Phet), the Deputy Chief Administrator of the SAO:

Wan *So, which agency or institutions do you have to work with most?*

Phet *We have to coordinate with almost every agency. With my position as the deputy chief administrator, my role is to coordinate. I have to address any problems or barrier to implementation, and coordinate amongst different actors. The chief executive of the SAO is a politician, right? We're in the middle, because when we receive the policy from the chief executive, we are the ones who coordinate with different divisions of implementation. We have to coordinate so that the chief executive's policy is achieved, because he's the representative of villagers and the people*

Wan *So do you receive policies directly from the chief executive? Do they need to go through the District Office (DO) first?*

Phet *No, it does not need to go through our DO. Policies come from different ministries, they then get passed down to provincial offices, then to DOs, and lastly to SAOs. [In our case,] when it reaches the chief executive, he would then pass it down to the chief administrator, and then to me as deputy chief administrator. We then have to implement the policy.*

Wan *So what do DOs generally do?*

Phet *The DOs are the agency that monitor SAOs.*

Wan *To make sure you work according to policies?*

Phet *Policies and also to make sure that our actions are legal—they monitor us.*

Wan *Oh okay, so SAOs are actually the ones who put policies into actions?*

Phet *Yes, the local offices are the ones who do it. We are the most important agency. Every ministry, division, and agency, they all end up at the local level. When they order anything, they all end up here. Every work, every project, they all come here, and we have to drive those policies into actions.*

In summary, the executive branch, led by the Chief Executive of the SAO, directs and proposes policy changes to the Provincial Administrative Office (PAO), related ministries, and other governmental agencies. The Chief Executive is an elected position with a 4-year term. Thus, the main incentive for him/her is to try his/her best to implement promised plans made during election campaigns. Once the policy is passed down, the administrative branch, led by the Chief Administrator of the SAO, then finds ways to implement the policy. The administrative branch, however, consists of civil servants who are hired and assigned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thus, they work

Figure 4-2: Sub-District Administrative Office

closely with the Chief Executive of the SAO to form policy as well as seeing its implementation through. All activities at the tambon level are monitored and reviewed by the District Office (DO) at the amphoe level.

In addition to the two branches of actors working in the SAO, the local governance branch, largely work to mediate disputes, ameliorate villagers' problems, and keep overall peace and well-being of their villagers. Within this branch, there are the head of tambon, who is usually also the head of his own village, and other heads of villages, who receive implementation plans and other information from the head of tambon. These actors are often the most trusted amongst villagers, because elected heads of villages are local villagers who were voted by their neighbors.

In another conversation with Ponsawan Kanrean (Berm), head of the tambon, explained:

Berm *Our scope of work is different from theirs. The SAO takes care of development budgets, but we take care of general problems, well-being, and livelihood of our villagers. But*

when villagers face problems, we convene together to find information and propose a solution to the SAO because they manage the budget. When we're in trouble, like there's not enough water for agriculture and we need a new water supply site, we have to be the ones who find a space for it. We have to ask villagers if anyone owns this land/space, and if they can allow it to be publicly used. When we have about 3-5 rai (48,000-60,000 sq.m.) of land, we then ask for their authorizing signatures, and attach the list along with the project proposal to the SAO and another copy to the DO. If the project is really over the SAO's budget or capability, they will then send it up to the PAO.

Wan *Besides this, do you have other scope of work?*

Berm *It's like looking after the village. Every ministry they would come to me—even fertilizer companies, pesticide companies, or any other types, they would come to me for my permission first.*

On the other hand, the local governance branch does not hold a lot of money for project implementation. Thus, when villagers need new development, the head of tambon then needs to propose the project to the chief executive of the SAO.

Wan *Say in the [case of road development], if you want to implement it now, can you ask for the budget from the SAO?*

Berm *Yes, if the project is well supported by villagers, who are willing to put their labor into the project, we can just ask for financial support. Or if we are unable to do it ourselves, we just tell the SAO to work on it for us. If it's also out of the SAO's hands, they will then request up to the PAO.*

Wan *So in fact, the smallest units of villages also have the capacity to propose what you need and ask for funding?*

Berm *Yes, if the project addresses a real issue or is a real need. Four to five years ago we proposed the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) for a water retention weir. We used the funding to build the weir to help slow down a water stream. We used our own labor to make it ourselves. The BAAC supported the costs for cement and steel bars, and we volunteered our own labors. Say if the BACC allocated funding for labor costs of [$6.25] per person per day, we talked among ourselves to not take the labor fee and keep the money for other public projects in the future instead.*

By understanding the relationships between various actors in the area, it becomes clearer to see how a certain project can be implemented, who we may want to engage, and in which capacity they can support new project proposals.

Figure 4-3: Pang Ta Wai SAO percentage of budget expenditure for FY 2017

Data source: SAO budgetary data, 2017

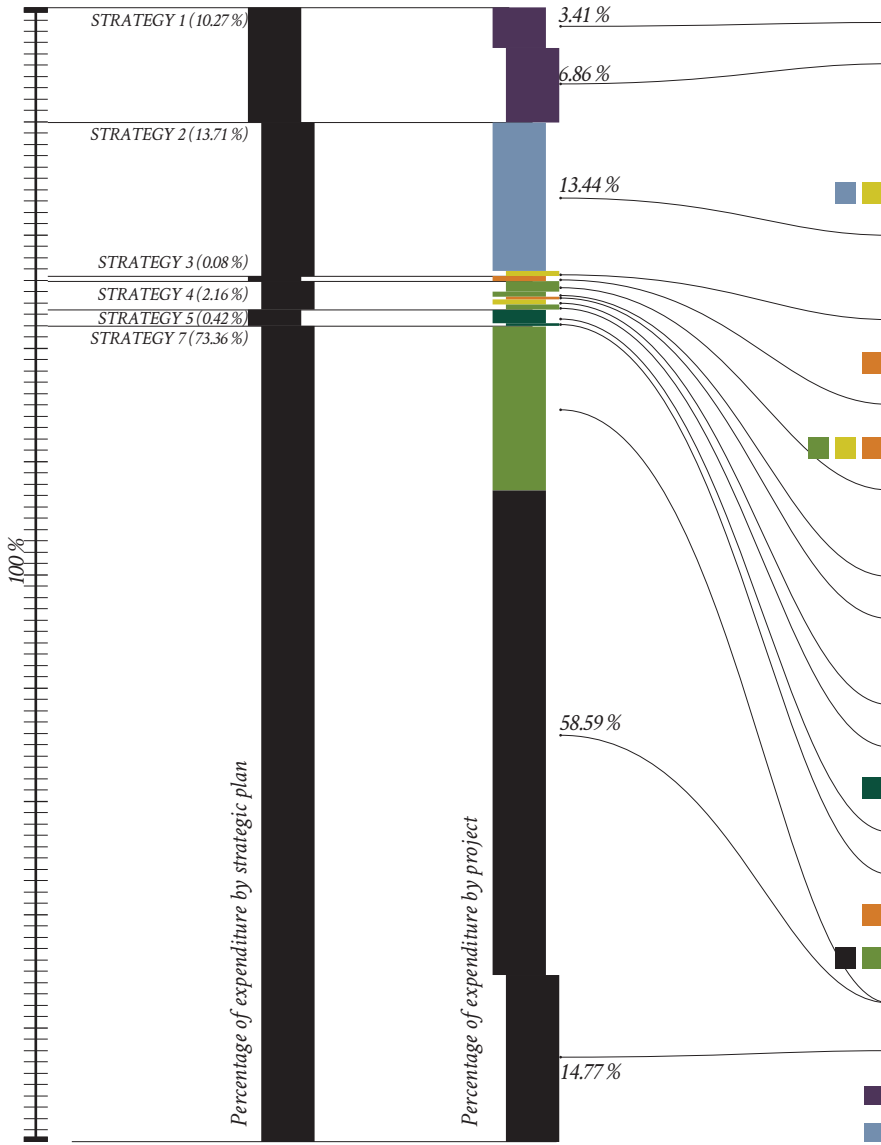


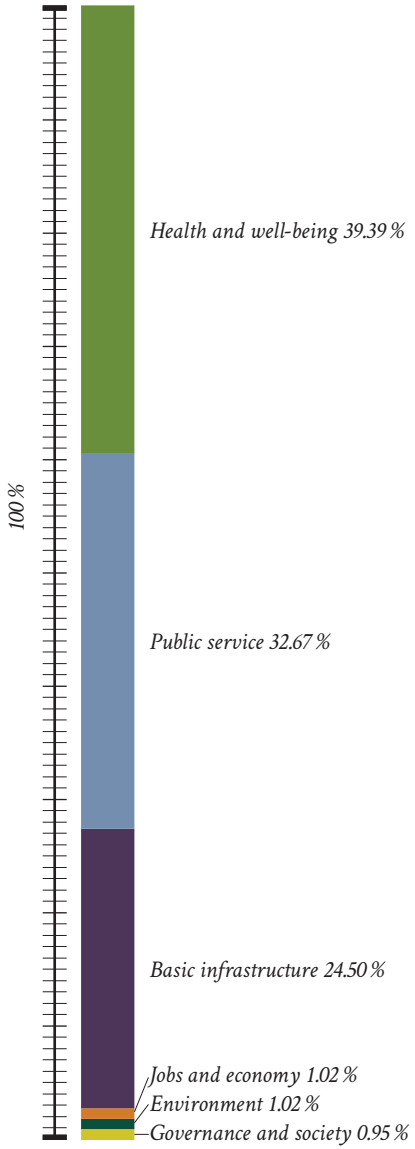
Table 4-1: Pang Ta Wai SAO strategic plan for FY 2017

Source: SAO budgetary data, 2017

Strategy 1: Basic infrastructure
• Build, renovate, and maintain roads, bridges, walkways, street scape, and drainage
• Build, renovate, and maintain public amenities and other structures.
• Improve the bus station and transportation system *(this item has no expenditure)*
• Improve water resources and distribution system *(this item has no expenditure)*
Strategy 2: Education, religion, arts and culture, and local knowledge
• Support, encourage, and development of education for everyone as well as for educators to create better opportunities
• Support the preservation of local arts, culture, and traditions
Strategy 3: Sufficiency economy and organic agriculture
• Support for sufficiency economy
Strategy 4: Health and well-being
• Support the development of public health services, health-related activities, and recreation
• Support sports holistically
• Support job creation, income generation, and working group development to improve people's well-being
• Support skill development and community engagement to improve national stability
• Prevent and address substance abuse and addiction
Strategy 5: Environment and natural resources
• Sustainably reserve and restore forest areas and natural resources
• Plan for trash and toxic waste management
Strategy 6: Improve quality of tourist sites and tourism *(this item has no expenditure)*
Strategy 7: Improve SAO's working capability
• Improvement of SAO's just management and efficiency
• Improvement of local staffs working efficiency

Basic infrastructure *Environment* *Governance and society* *Others*
Public service *Health and wellbeing* *Jobs and economy* *Admin*

Figure 4-4: SAO percentage of budget expenditure excluding administrative costs by research category
Data source: SAO budgetary data, 2017



Past Implementatioin and Future Plans

The SAO was able to provide their 2017 budget report, as summarized in Table 4-1. The table shows existing implementation plan which can be compared to the new policy recommendation. However, as the SAO's categorization does not exactly align with policy categories in this research, I decided to code the items in the 2017 and 2018 strategic plans plan in correspondent to the new recommendation.

Through the SAO 2017 budget report, I then created Figure 4-3 to show the percentage of budget expenditure for each strategic plan and project, which further helps show the SAO implementation priorities. With the alignment of categorization, Figure 4-3 also shows color-coded categorization under this research framework. It is also important to note that this budget report includes all of the SAO expenditure, in a total of $2.37 million. Thus, around 50-60% of all expenditure was spent on administrative costs including maintenance, transportation, salary, and other community funding pools.

By excluding administrative costs, Figure 4-4 shows that the SAO has significantly prioritized health and well-being, public service and basic infrastructure over other categories including jobs and economy, environment, and governance and society. In details, each category contains items as followed:

Health and well-being

- Support the development of public health services, health-related activities, and recreation
- Support sports holistically
- Prevent and address substance abuse and addiction
- Welfare for elderly
- Welfare for disabled persons
- Welfare for AIDS patients

Public service

- Support, encourage, and development of education for everyone as well as for educators to create better opportunities

Basic infrastructure

- Build, renovate, and maintain roads, bridges, walkways, streetscape, and drainage

Table 4-2: Pang Ta Wai SAO strategic plan for FY 2018

Strategy 1: Basic infrastructure
• Build, renovate, and maintain roads, bridges, walkways, and drainage
• Build, renovate, and maintain public amenities and other structures
• Improve the bus station and transportation system
• Make plans for the tambon
• Improve water resources and distribution system for household and agricultural usage
Strategy 2: Sufficiency economy
• Support the sufficiency economy philosophy
• Support career development for villagers
• Support and develop "substitute crops"
Strategy 3: Education
• Improve primary care education
• Improve basic education (K-9)
• Improve non-formal education
• Improve local education for international market
• Improve villagers' access to information
Strategy 4: Environment
• Protect and care for forests
• Pollution controls
• Management of sewage water
• Rehabilitate and manage trash
• Rehabilitate and improve natural resources and environment
Strategy 5: Agricultural technology
• Develop agriculture technology
Strategy 6: Strengthen social cohesion and just governance
• Improvement of SAO's management transparency and accountability
• Improvement of villagers' strengths and potentials in all aspects
• Organize villages and societies
• Prevent and mitigate disasters
• Keep peace and safety of life and assets
• Develops local development plans
Strategy 7: Improve SAO's working capability
• Improve working quality
• Support working efficiency
Strategy 8: Health and well-being
• Improve villagers' health
• Improve villagers' well-being
• Support for sports and other recreation
• Support for religion, culture, and traditions
• Improve household sanitary and structure
Strategy 9: Tourism
• Develop and improve tourist sites
• Develop tourism staff
• Support tourism

Source: http://www.pangtawai.go.th/strategy1.php, 2018.

Basic infrastructure *Health and wellbeing* *Others*
Public service *Governance and society* *Admin*
Environment *Jobs and economy*

- Build, renovate, and maintain public amenities and other structures.

Jobs and economy

- Support for sufficiency economy
- Support skill development and community engagement to improve national stability

Environment

- Sustainably reserve and restore forest areas and natural resources
- Plan for trash and toxic waste management

Governance and society

- Support the preservation of local arts, culture, and traditions
- Support skill development and community engagement to improve national stability

While this analysis shows a broad idea of how the SAO prioritize their activities and development strategies, there are some caveats in using a budget expenditure report as a tool for analysis. First, this analysis is only able to capture activities that require financing, whereas some projects may not. An example of such projects is a trash management program done by the SAO, which Peraphet Pliakot told me about.

Wan *I've seen people segregating plastic bottles.*

Phet *Yes, people now segregate trash. We've also made bags for them to aid trash segregation. When it's time for Songkran*, we will create a merit ceremony but use trash instead of cash. The trash is aggregated at the SAO, and we would sell it all. The money we get from this event we put it back to the funding pool for elderly.*

Wan *Have you done projects that did not require financing?*

Phet *Well, there are some, like the trash management program I just told you about.*

Another caveat to using a budget report to show implementation priorities is that financing depends largely on the type of project which may require more or less financing. For projects such as building or maintaining basic infrastructure, they often require more financing. Conversely, projects that can use volunteered labor they may cost less. Nonetheless, the budget report still is a very helpful tool to see the overview of strategic plan emphasis.

In addition to the strategic plan for 2018, the SAO strategic plan for 2018 is also available online, which is shown in Table 4-2. Some of the key observations between the implemented plan in 2017 and this strategic plan for 2018 include the followings:

1. For jobs and economy, the SAO keeps sufficiency economy and tourism, which was not implemented in 2017, on their 2018 strategic plan (Strategy 2 and 9 respectively). In addition to the two, they have also added agricultural technology (Strategy 5) as a new item.

2. The SAO has also added social cohesion and just governance (Strategy 6) in this plan, which aims to create more transparency as well as efficiency in their work.

3. Under Education (Strategy 3), the SAO has included many interesting items which seemingly align with the policy proposal. Those include: improve local education for the international market and improve villagers' access to information.

* Songkran is the Thai New Year festival which is held on the 13-15 of April of every year.

It is difficult to see how the 2018 strategic plan will play out in reality. However, this plan also shows possibilities to incorporate some of the policy recommendations from this research, which will be explained in the following section.

Policy Comparison

It is interesting that the policy proposal described in the third chapter somewhat reflects the current policy as well. Furthermore, by looking into the budget details and project description, the current policies can then be compared and contrasted with the new recommendations. This section is structured in the same way as the third chapter on policy recommendation.

Jobs and economy

While poverty and sources of income are pressing issues, which most people recognize, career and economic development are not on the list of development strategies. There are some items related to jobs and economy in the budget report, but they are dispersed as sub-programs in different strategies ranging from health and well-being to tourism, sufficiency economy, and agriculture. The lack of an economic development division makes it difficult to address this issue effectively and holistically. Furthermore, given how important jobs and economic development are in the rural areas, the lack thereof also disallows the SAO to provide other supports for business development such as incubation, seed funding, marketing, and others. Having a jobs and economic development division within the SAO would also help engender the policy recommendations from the earlier chapter as followed.

1. *Support sports through an economic and career development lens in addition to health and well-being.*
2. *Empower local store owners to become more competitive with large convenience stores.*
3. *Subsidizing rents for income-generating spaces, which may include farmland and market space.*
4. *Tap into available online technology including e-commerce and other tools that can serve local needs.*
5. *Focus on empowering local businesses and career developments while developing tourism more as a supporting mechanism.*

Specific to sports, the 2017 budget report shows that the "holistic support for sport" program is listed under Strategy 4: Health and Well-being. Under this program, the SAO implemented two projects in 2017, which includes:

- *Supporting and encouraging people to enter Thai Cup sports competition which occurs annually, and*
- *Holding a sports competition to campaign against substance abuse and addiction.*

The same also goes for the 2018 strategic plan: sports being listed under Strategy 8 Health and Well-being. The description and categorization

of the two projects under the holistic support for sports programs in both years show that sports have been viewed through the lens of health alone.

While the association of sports to health benefits is a straightforward link, as discussed earlier in the previous chapter, sports can also contribute to career and economic development in addition to health benefits. The main proposal that students have brought up is to create proper stadiums for soccer and race tracks for motorcycle racing. However, because the construction of stadiums and racetrack requires a lot of investment, one possibility of implementation is to utilize existing infrastructure. Places such as the school's soccer field and the streets for racing can be used to hold formal competitions. Allocation of specific time and place for this existing infrastructure to be held for team practices can also be done at no cost as well because, at other times, they can normally be used for other purposes. In the case that the SAO can provide more financial support, they can be made through team management, encouraging scouting through these competitions, and help to advertise these competitions for external audiences.

Looking at sports through the lens of economic development and job creation can help open up new channels of community involvement as well as establishing new possibilities for youth engagement in this new economy. The implementation suggestions above also require less financing to start. Furthermore, if sports become an attraction in the area, it may also contribute to tourism and other benefits as well.

Regarding supporting local store owners, despite the fact that the SAO does not have support for local businesses and marketplaces in their strategic plan, Phet Charoen (Moo 3) has recently established its gas vending station as well as a marketplace through another source of income.

In a conversation with Wirat Sopimpa, the head of Phet Charoen village (Moo 3):

Wirat One clear example is the Pracharat Program. It's one of the policies that the DO has introduced.

Wan What is it?

Wirat Villagers in each village would convene to decide on what to do with the allocated budget. The financial supports have been through the Million Fund. It depends on each village to decide [what to do with the money]. For our village, we decided to create the vending gas station. We could have done anything, but this is what villagers have voted on.

Another related policy in villages that was touched upon and needed more exploration is the Pracharat Market program. Saowalak Techai (Sao), a teacher at Phet Mongkhon School, briefly mentioned it in one of the many conversations we had.

Sao The most recent implemented policy that I have seen is the Pracharat Market. Every village has to have a central marketplace. They all began together. These markets allow villagers to come and sell their products.

Availability of these local markets helps bring products to consumers locally, and perhaps at no cost as well, which aligns with the

third recommendation under this topic on subsidizing rents in market places. On the other hand, these local marketplaces are not able to accommodate the change in lifestyle aspiration of new generations. Thus, I had also brought up the idea of e-commerce to Wirat Sopimpa.

Wan *Students have talked about the integration of technology in their lives and the possibility of selling things online.*

Wirat *Well, it's possible, but if we talk about the rural population, we can't compete with large corporations. They can't think in advance. If it's a technological system, for us villagers, we can only send stuff to be sold. If it's just villagers [managing their own businesses], I don't think it's possible. Maybe if they form a group of a company, then it might be possible.*

Wan *Students have also talked about the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program, which is an opportunity in this area. The chili paste and other products, can they develop themselves to become something like what you've said?*

Wirat *With villagers' capability, I don't think it's possible when there is no support from the government. In topics of packaging, supply chain, marketing, the government should help out. If it's just villagers doing this by themselves, I don't think it's possible.*

Wirat's input on business development further supports having a jobs and economic development division within the SAO to help empower local businesses, which can support both conventional shops as well as e-commerce.

In addition to supporting local businesses, the SAO is currently looking at tourism as a way to the issue of the local economy. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, developing tourist sites is highly competitive in Thailand. Furthermore, it also requires other support systems including traffic, trash management, and others to make sure that tourism actually benefits the local people. Thus, I still believe that empowering the local economy is the first step to create a sustainable change in the community, before development of tourist sites.

In all, the jobs and economic development policy recommendations should be highlighted among the SAO's development strategies, which can include establishing a jobs and economic development division. The benefit of this division can help the SAO refocus its attention to local economic development by looking holistically at possibilities and alternatives for sustained sources of income—be it through sports, local businesses, e-commerce, or tourism. With the SAO's staff working together across different divisions as well as working closely with villagers, the office already has a lot of potentials to effectively support economic development if it decides to do so.

Basic infrastructure

In contrast to jobs and economic development, basic infrastructure is listed as the SAO's first development strategy in both 2017 and 2018, which is not a surprising fact as infrastructure is one of the most basic development methods. Moreover, the implementation of this strategy is highly visible and is easy to monitor—an infrastructure has either been built or not built. Thus, most of the policy recommendations in this category are to continue working on these projects as they are still much needed in various areas. The recommendations include:

6. *Continue to work on road maintenance, however, consider and incorporate other usages and vehicles for new road construction, as a way to increase road safety as well as to support other modes of transportation.*
7. *Continue to work on water management system, and consider building an ecosystem around water ponds and river to help address the soil's ability to retain surface and underground water.*
8. *Start building internet sharing systems to test out if free Wi-Fi should be implemented in the area.*

In 2017, $153,000 was spent on the basic infrastructure strategy of the SAO, which accounts for 24.5% of the total SAO expenditure, excluding administrative costs. It is also the third highest expenditure amongst SAO's development strategies. The expenditure includes the followings:

- *Construction of concrete roads in Moo 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 or the total of 750-meter-long of new roads;*
- *Construction of 5-meter long drainage system section in Moo 1;*
- *Construction of the SAO building; and*
- *Extension of the wired audio system in Moo 5*

Interestingly, although a lack of water supply remains an issue during the dry season, there were not any water resource projects in the SAO's 2017 expenditure. One of the reasons can be that the SAO has a special project to build its office building. Thus it needs to allocate the budget from somewhere. On the other hand, it may also mean that access to water has already reached a minimum requirement of sort, which allows the SAO to reallocate the program budget elsewhere. These are mere speculations which need further supporting evidence. However, at a large picture, the consistency of the program in 2017 and 2018 shows that the SAO understands the need for road and water infrastructures and is ready to allocate budget for project implementation in the future.

On the other hand, development of technological infrastructure does not exist in any of the SAO's budget items. Thus, the inclusion of it as a basic infrastructure can be a challenge. As described in the policy proposal, while internet access can be beneficial, game addiction and other unfavorable uses of the internet can easily discourage policymakers from supporting internet access as an infrastructure project. On the other hand, having free Wi-Fi as part of the basic infrastructure strategy is merely providing a basic tool in which villagers can utilize up to their own needs.

Thus, it is equally important to look at potential

benefits of providing free village Wi-Fi. First, as shown in the list above, the last item on the infrastructure expenditure includes an extension of a wired audio system. This system can easily be seen in many rural villages in Thailand, and it is used for information distribution including news of local events, community meetings, and others. Despite people's access to the internet, it is interesting to see how the wired audio system still needs further development and is used widely. Having free internet access can largely help switch this expenditure to a soft cost service fee. Secondly, if the SAO supports free Wi-Fi access to villagers, it then becomes a pooling system which may help eliminate or lessen villagers' expenses on internet fees and even cellular fees, because most calls can now be done online. Pooling of internet services and fees then further helps ameliorate over-spending, which relates to another issue of household debts. Lastly, access to the internet is also a basic infrastructure which provides access to online marketplaces, higher education, extracurricular knowledge, as well as social networks which help address many on-going issues surrounding rural-urban divides. Thus, the incorporation of technology as a basic infrastructure can benefit household expenditure, local economy, and learning opportunity for all.

Thus, while the community needs continuous development and maintenance of road and water infrastructure, access to the internet will sooner or later, if not has already, become everyone's basic need despite being in rural or urban areas. By developing it as part of the basic infrastructure strategy, the community as a whole can benefit from this access sooner rather than later.

Health, and well-being

This category is the largest supports that the SAO has been working on. It aligns with Strategy 4: Health and Well-being and other welfare programs of the SAO's development strategy in 2017. In sum, projects related to health and well-being accounts for 39.39% of SAO project expenditure in 2017. The same strategy also applies to strategy 8 in the 2018 strategic plan. Thus, policy recommendations for this category are to:

9. *Continue the awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs for drug addicts.*
10. *Create other rehabilitation programs to help alcoholics and smoking addicts as well.*

The four projects which SAO implemented in 2017 under substance abuse include:

- *Hiring students during summer break to help reduce social issues, local poverty, and substance abuse;*
- *Funding youth camp to prevent substance abuse;*
- *Holding an event on International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26 June; and*

- *Campaigns and programs to prevent substance abuse overall.*

The total budgeting for all of these four projects is around $5,009 or 0.34% of the total annual budget. As presented above, much of the expenses have been to support events, education, and training for youths in the area. The SAO works a lot with various schools in the tambon as well as with police officers who often are the trainers for these events. This tambon takes a rehabilitative approach to drug abuse.

In a conversation with Panya Pradapol, Chief Executive of the SAO of Tambon Pang Tawai:

Panya There is still some drug and substance abuse in the area. In some ways, it is getting better because people have grown older and secondly because there are also ex-abusers who have improved themselves and became sober. They have been able to earn income and live happily in the society.

Wan So these people come to help?

Panya Most of the time we would tell their stories as case studies that when you slip off and do wrong things, it does not necessarily lead to failures. They can use this as information as well—it's to get to see different working organizations around this issue. They get to see that many people can also succeed, even though they have made mistakes before, only if they have the will to become sober.

In 2017, the Pang Ta Wai SAO reported that there were 47 people in the rehabilitation center in 2014, and in 2017, there were ten people who entered the career development program as part of the rehabilitation process as well. The fact that students are very well aware of drug and substance abuse, and think that it is an important issue to be addressed, also proves that the SAO, the schools, and the police have been effectively implementing drug prevention programs in the area—at least for the three villages surrounding Phet Mongkhon School.

On the other hand, drinking and smoking continue to be an issue in the area. The concept of forbidding drinking and smoking might not be a right approach since its negative effects on individual health and social risks are less severe than drugs. On the other hand, over-consumption and addiction can have direct impacts on personal health and wealth as well as indirect impact on family members and neighbors. Thus, it is more effective to introduce responsible drinking and smoking. Furthermore, with the SAO's effective rehabilitation programs, it may also be helpful to provide supports for alcohol addicts as well.

Environment

Environmental preservation accounts for only 1.02% of the SAO project expenditure in 2017. One reason behind this small fraction may be that the national forestry office is directly responsible for environmental preservation. The five projects which SAO implemented in 2017 under natural resource reservation include the followings.

- *Reserving plant species*
- *Planting trees on various occasion*
- *Planting Vetiver grass to help strengthen soil surface*
- *Training for forest fire prevention*
- *Programs on forest fire and smog prevention and mitigation*

On the other hand, the 2018 strategic plan interestingly incorporates pollution control and trash management in addition to environmental preservation. Thus, the new recommendations, which are listed below, can easily fit into the 2018 strategic plan.

11. *Include natural integration into new spatial development and develop a long-term environmental restoration in the area.*
12. *Campaign for waste reduction in addition to the current recycling and reusing programs.*
13. *Educate farmers about the long-term financial impact of crop burning and using too much chemical fertilizers.*

Although the national forestry has the mandate to preserve its forests, they work together with nearby communities to focus on natural resource reservation as well. On the other hand, the idea of preservation has been implemented through a protective perspective rather than embedding the natural world into people's lives. Thus, the idea of accessibility to natural resources for local villagers has been more limiting rather than inviting. The deputy chief administrator also told me about a case in Klong Pla Soi (Moo 7), which is the westernmost village of the tambon.

Wan *Have you ever had cases of forest encroachment or trespassing?*

Phet *It's common.*

Wan *What are the reasons behind them?*

Phet *Well, there's a lot in Klong Pla Soi, Moo 7. At Moo 7, the village is way up there in that area, right next to the forest. Actually, their lifestyle is with the forest. They would find goods from the forest and sell as their main sources of income. When the forestry office strictly enforces the law, these villagers' main source of income was diminished. They used to collect mushrooms and bamboo shoots. In the mushroom season, they would collect mushrooms, and when it's the bamboo shoots season, they would collect bamboo shoots.*

Wan *So the SAO has...*

Phet *We took part in meeting with the forestry office and the head of the village to solve the issue. The forestry office has thus relaxed its enforcement a bit to allow for villagers to benefit from the forest. Now the villagers are allowed to go into the forest, but only for a couple of days per week, so that it is not too frequent. And they cannot let any outsiders in; the allowance has only been made for villagers in this particular village. They need to help take care of the forests like if you go in, you have to come out. We are afraid that*

they will go in to hunt for animals, to camp, or something like that. So, we issued them special cards that allow them to enter.

Aside from this card, the expansion of forest or natural resources outside of the designated area has been made less important than road constructions or other development. Without planning for certain expansion in the future, planted trees are sometimes later cut off to make way for new developments.

Wan *In a conversation with the students, they would like to see more shaded with trees along the streets. Do you think it's possible to find a source of funding for something like this?*

Berm *It's not hard [to find fund], but the more important thing is the limited land. Like before* the temple used to be this spacious place of *about 32,000 sq.m. On important holidays like father's day or mother's day, we would ask for tree sprouts from the forestry office and plant them around the temple. But now we have to start cutting them down because we need to construct new living quarters and toilet facility. We have to cut the trees down because space is limited.*

Thus, one way to help the expansion of natural environment into villages is to make explicit that trees and natural landscape are a part of the plan. Thus, a natural landscape plan needs to take into account expansion of roads and buildings as well as other types of growth. In a way, by expanding natural landscape into villages, it may also help prevent forest encroachment in that certain plants or products may be as abundant in the villages as in the forest itself.

In addition to incorporating natural environment into people's lives, it is also necessary to mitigate environmental pollution. To slowly change people's behaviors, the SAO understands factors that contribute to people's incentives. For the issue of crop burning, their solution has been to incentivize change through pricing.

Wan *Students have talked a lot about sugarcane crop burning. Do you have any policy that addresses this issue?*

Panya *There has recently been a new law on air pollution in particular, but not many villagers and buyers understand this new law because many people still cannot afford to buy reaping tractors. They are still very pricey. Before the price used to be 20 million Baht per tractor, and now it has reduced to around 8-12 million. I have recently heard that it is now around 8 million. The government has recently given funding through the Bank for Agriculture and Cooperatives to give out loans for these tractors, but it is not enough. They have also been campaigning by pricing incentive. So, fresh cut sugarcane gets 50 Baht, but before the price for fresh cuts used to be 30. We take the 30 from the burned sugarcane price and subsidize it to the fresh cut sugarcane instead. In addition to that, we have also increased the price to 70 Baht for fresh cuts by adding another 20 Baht from a fund. It then becomes an incentive for more people to do fresh cuts. This year there is a lot less burned crops. Un, have you seen the change? It has reduced. Otherwise every evening there would be ashes all over.*

Un *Yeah, there used to be ashes every day, some days less than another, but some days there are none.*

Panya *These days, it has reduced by a lot, which is a good thing. As I said, the policy needs to come from above. The SAO can only distribute the information, but people won't do it unless it is the law that is enforced. But I think incentivizing, say if I don't just give you 50 Baht, I pushed the price of burned sugarcane down 100 Baht and added that 100 to the fresh cuts, or even at 120 Baht, people will change to do fresh cuts instead. It will also require more labor.*

On the other hand, littering and trash management has also been an issue that the SAO has creatively worked on. They have begun this project a few years back, and have continued to improve the trash management in the area.

Phet *We also have policies about trash, trash management.*

Wan *What is it?*

Phet *Well now, instead of putting our money into buying a trash truck which requires a lot of money and does not fully clean out villages, we have been doing a trash management program. The program focuses on trash segregation at the beginning of the chain, so segregation since within households. Which trash can be sold, which one can be used as fertilizers, which one is compostable. Once they are all separated, the SAO has this program to collect the trash. We made a trash bank at the SAO, which was established only two years ago.*

Wan *Oh yes, I have seen people separating plastic bottles.*

Phet *Yes, people have begun to understand trash segregation, so it reduces trash since the beginning. By this Songkran, we would make a trash collecting parade around the village. The money from the trash sold is put into the elderly care fund for the village.*

While trash burning and consumption of non-compostable and one-time-use plastics and other packaging materials remain an environmental issue, the progress of the village has been quite significant and impressive.

The solution also incorporates community engagement, so that it becomes something fun and useful. In addition to these effective programs, I would also encourage the SAO to start implementing trash reduction programs to further help address the issue of pollution and trash management as well.

Public service

In 2017, the SAO spent 32.67% of its project budget on public services specific to education, which is the second highest expenditure not including administrative costs. Much of the expenditure goes to school lunch programs and other supports for holistic child development. Thus, there is not much budget left to create other learning programs, which is part of the policy recommendation.

14. *Leverage existing facilities, such as the school, to create additional learning opportunities for the local population.*

Supports for learning opportunities outside of schools and for other age group are often considered luxurious items when it comes to rural development, despite its relevance to jobs and economic development. On the other hand, in addition to leveraging existing facilities and human resources at the school, the SAO can also start thinking about incorporating learning experiences through the surrounding built and natural environment. Such projects may include making murals, pop-up exhibitions, and other types of learning experiences which utilize existing local materials and infrastructures.

Governance and society

Much of the SAO past expenditure on this topic supported community events rather than addressing issues of transparency and accountability. On the other hand, the 2018 strategic plan has included improvement in accountability and transparency, which aligns with the new policy recommendations.

15. *Be more transparent in the budgetary and project information, so that villagers can check how their tax is spent.*
16. *Integrate participatory processes into policymaking it is an empowerment tool as well as allowing the government to gain local insights. Furthermore, these processes also help build relationships and trusts.*

Furthermore, the SAO has been very transparent about their work as well as sharing information and documents with me for this research. This cooperation shows an intention to be more transparent and accountable to their work. Despite such efforts, the issue of corruption persists in the community as this topic often comes up in conversations

time and again. Thus, in addition to being transparent, integrating participatory processes into policymaking will further help build ownership and social accountability towards project expenditure. On the other hand, in a conversation with the head of the tambon, participation can be easier said than done.

Wan *So the villagers will choose amongst themselves on how they wish to spend the budget?*

Berm *We do talk to each other and hold a meeting with everyone in the village. Sometimes the villagers do not have any ideas, so I have to propose to them. I would first talk to the SAO, my assistants, and the village committee about what we should do. Basically, I would have these people suggest about 4-5 ideas. In community meetings, I then let villagers know that there are these ideas on the table as well so that they can choose amongst them.*

This process is not perfect, but at the same time, villagers barely have the time to think about community development when they have to ponder on their own struggles. Furthermore, the head of the tambon and the SAO may also not know about other participatory processes except for voting. In such case, the workshop series done for this research can also be an example for them to conduct further participatory processes.

CONCLUSION

[To] understand rural poverty better, and to judge better what to do, outsiders, of whatever persuasion, have to see things from the other end.

Robert Chambers, 1984, p. 46

Through my fieldwork, I began to realize that Chambers' theory of rural development which focused on addressing rural poverty is no longer relevant in many communities. The people I came to know in Tambon Pang Tawai are now equipped with smartphones and internet access. They are also provided with basic education and healthcare. At the same time, new challenges also arise, and the contrast between urban and rural livelihood now focuses more on the equality of opportunities for personal and societal growth. On the other hand, despite the rural context that has already changed, I have also come to believe that Robert Chambers' mindset towards rural development remains relevant. To understand rural poverty and to judge better what to do, outsiders like me have to start by seeing things from the other end.

This research came out of my seemingly unrelated interests of rural-urban migration, rural development, teaching, and photography. When I found the sentence in Chambers' book, "Rural Development: Putting the Last First" (1984), this research started to take shape, and each of my interests found its place in the study. I knew that I wanted to understand a rural community before recommending any changes, and so I decided to create a space for such discussion through a workshop series. As I have facilitated workshops and taught youth before, I decided to engage students in this discussion as a learning process that revolves around people and issues in their community. I incorporated photography as a way to creatively elicit stories and to attract students' interests. Through these tools and processes, I ended up learning much more than I could have imagined.

Significant findings

This research led me to understand that the main drivers for rural-urban migration in this community are the availability of economic opportunities as well as the preferences on lifestyle, both of which are quite indistinguishable from each other when it comes to students' aspirations. Furthermore, they also relate to how students weigh various facets of their own community versus the city they aspire to live in.

Regarding economic opportunities, diversity of jobs and sources of income are the main reasons for people to move into cities. Specific jobs that only exist in cities are especially attractive for students who aspire to live a different life than what they have in the rural areas. Additionally, a lack of job diversity also limits income opportunities in these agricultural-based communities. Thus, many people need to find additional income sources from urban areas. In other words, this research finds that there is a

valid argument to support internal migration from the perspective of rural economic benefits (Deshingkar, 2006). Such benefits often come through the means of remittance distribution and input of labor force to help sustain national economic growth led by cities. On the other hand, as Thailand is largely in the service-based economy and is trying to move towards a more innovative one, I would also argue that rural areas also need to start empowering their local population alongside agricultural activities by means of entrepreneurship, sports, creativity, and innovation. Subsequently, economic development in rural areas through economic empowerment will also contribute to the larger economy of the country as there will be more supply of skilled workers. Moreover, supporting more sources of income in rural areas can also help balance out the pressure of fluctuating agricultural prices as well.

Through the lens of lifestyle differences in urban and rural areas, it is an agreement that urban areas offer a more "convenient" lifestyle as there are more availability and variety of goods, opportunities, and other amenities. Urban areas are also perceived as more convenient due to paved roads and proximity to stores and services. However, there are also the urban inconveniences of traffic congestion, pollution, and chaos that students put into their decision equation. Additionally, rural areas offer an abundance of the natural environment as well as congestion-free roads and a serene lifestyle. Combining these existing factors, it thus depends on personal lifestyle choices and how each sees themselves fit into one environment over another. On the other hand, these issues under the topic of rural-urban migration bring out the importance of placemaking as a rural development process in addition to concurrent infrastructural development. From the research, integration of natural environment into people's lives can further support preferences for the rural lifestyle.

Limitations of findings

The findings of this research as mentioned above are specific to Tambon Pang Tawai, Kampaengphet, Thailand. The first reason behind this uniqueness is that this community has higher mobility to move back and forth between their villages and Bangkok due to relative proximity. Other communities in the mountain range up north or on islands in the south will naturally have different perceptions towards rural-urban dynamics. Secondly, this area is quite fertile as compared to other areas such as the northeastern part of Thailand, where many people in Ban Phet Mongkhon and Phet Charoen migrated from. The proximity to Mae Wong National Forest directly contributes to the fertility of the land in this area. In other areas with less arable land, the limitation in agricultural production will affect their sources of income directly, which can further push people to migrate. Lastly, the issue of rural-urban migration in Thailand may not represent all urbanization processes across different countries as most Thais carry a strong sense of home, strong social ties, and responsibilities

toward their parents and their land. Thus, in most cases, rural-urban migration in Thailand is often seasonal or temporary.

The process

Despite precedent studies on these rural-urban dynamics, I can only truly understand and empathize with rural challenges by spending the time to engage with youth and living in the community. In other words, putting on their shoes helped me see the community through their lens. Consequently, I am able to build a policy recommendation for the development of this community as discussed throughout this research.

To understanding youth perceptions toward the rural-urban dynamics as well as the policy recommendation, one of the most significant contributions of this research is using photography as a tool for the youth-based participatory process. Photography assignments urged students to explore their community more deliberately than they had ever done before, this included looking more attentively and moving through their community more slowly than they usually do. This process allowed students to first engage with their environment through their own lens—things they wished to show (opportunities) and things they often turned a blind eye on (challenges). When students brought back the photographs and presented them in class, I was also able to ask about other objects that were captured in the photograph. In a way, these photographs also helped pointed me to various elements of life in the community, which I otherwise would not have known to ask about. Furthermore, from the feedback which I received from students at the end of the workshop, many students also appreciated having learned photography skills which is new to them.

In addition to students' photography, I also pushed myself to explore the community through photography. Having a photograph project in my mind and a camera in my hands urged me to stay curious, to be more observational, to explore unusual spots, and to try to look at the environment, the situation, and the people from different angles. In other words, photography made me see the community more thoroughly than I might have otherwise. Additionally, it also created another type of engagement with students as I began to

ask them to take me to places. Students became my guides, and we walked along the streets together and explored the community together. They would tell me about their experiences in different places, which no one would have thought to be significant.

Through such exploration, the series of workshop slowly engaged students in deeper conversations and critical reflections about their community. This workshop series acted as an introduction for students, none of whom have ever been asked these questions before, to begin thinking about how their community should progress in the future. Towards the end of the workshop, a student also became interested in the development of her community that she joined me in an interview with the Chief Executive of the SAO. Because I spent the time engaging with students over these development issues, the research planted seeds in these students and empowered them to know that their voices matter and have the potential to affect change in their own community.

Research contribution

I believe that the series of workshops is the main contribution of this research as it can be useful and relevant for community development projects in other contexts around the world such as informal settlements, historical communities, and others. More importantly, however, this research is also a learning process both for me and especially for the students. As education is often confined within the school's boundary, much of what is learned in school can rarely be translated to students' lives after school. Thus, the methodology of this research has a potential to be developed into a curriculum for secondary school students. The bridge of students' learning and community development allow students to engage in real-world problems and also help planners and development professionals to ground their policies and solutions to the insights of local youth who are often forgotten in the planning process.

Further research

1. As I spent time living in the village, I have become close friends with many teachers and villagers. These relationships allow me to continue engaging with the community further. As such, further research directly related to this case study is to expand the conversation to engage adults and local governments to further explore ways in which the policy proposal can be implemented in the future.

2. Additionally, as suggested earlier, this research process has the potential to be transferred to other areas of Thailand. One potential is to see how this process may or may not be applicable in other rural areas, slum communities, or in other countries.

3. Lastly, there is room for this research process to be developed into a toolkit or a curriculum which can be used by any individuals to engage in their own community development projects.

PART III
TO SEE THINGS FROM OUR END

We come back and find that there is so much life in our hometown!

There's so much more to do and so much more to give back;

So many events to celebrate and to dance to,

To smile for,

And to dress up for.

There are also many markets,

Some of which are small, and some are large.

But all are energetic

As markets spice up our lives.

It's where we can relate nature to food and food to life,

Because pork were pigs,

And fish were fishes

And their lives feed our bodies and souls.

At home, there are elders who need our care,

and youngsters who miss our warmth.

And so we try to thrive,
By means of creation as well as superstition

Through the things that are known,
and the things that are new

Thus, there's luxury amongst modesty,

And technology alongside tectonics;

But no, we don't forget gardening and farming,

Because there is always beauty in growing food for life.

So I have come to understand that life here has valued traditions,
but it is open for new explorations

To help enhance their opportunities,
and address their challenges

And when it is time for me to leave,

I know that I too can always come home.

APPENDIX A – WORKSHOPS

List of Students

First name	*Last name*	*Nickname*	*Grade*	*Mooban*
Chanasorn	Jantasen	Gee	8	Phet Mongkhon
Jaturawat	Wangkeeree	Big	8	Phet Charoen
Kasemsan	Seefong	Wak	8	Phet Charoen
Poompat	Gingnok	Pu	8	Phet Mongkhon
Pornjarat	Tunpirat	Un	8	Phet Charoen
Pratai	Wonglamai	Jiw	8	Wong Kao Tong
Ratanapoom	Lertlam	Yew	8	Phet Charoen
Ratatamanoon	Kulkom	Too	8	Phet Mongkhon
Rathikarn	Peungdee	Ning	8	Phet Charoen
Sarawut	Nakun	Wut	8	Phet Charoen
Sintorn	Ginwong	Bom	8	Phet Mongkhon
Sudarat	Suwannakam	Gook	8	Phet Charoen
Sutinai	Wangkeeree	Nick	8	Phet Charoen
Watsaya	Pimsena	Oi	8	Phet Charoen
Aniwat	Meepo	Ta	9	Mo Somboon
Natkulporn	Jabsaengjan	Nut	9	Phet Charoen
Panupong	Boonmee	Tiw	9	Phet Mongkhon
Pataranit	Kamniam	Nite	9	Phet Charoen
Rattanaporn	Duangmul	Prae	9	Tak Fah
Runchida	Mansub	Gib	9	Phet Mongkhon
Sarocha	Kulmoong	Noey	9	Tak Fah
Tanyabo on	Baotee	Note	9	Phet Charoen
Taweesak	Kunkiaw	Tle	9	Phet Charoen
Thiraphat	Saiyawan	First	9	Phet Charoen
Weeriya	Karod	Gloy	9	Phet Charoen
Wootisit	Kampoom	Lee	9	Phet Charoen

Workshop Detail

Participants

- Students' age: 13-15
- Total 26 students including 14 eight graders, and12 ninth graders
- Workshops are conducted separately for each class, due to class size and scheduling

Equipment

Each participant should have a camera. It can be a phone or other device that can take a picture. If any students do not have this, they can also work with their friends.

Schedule and timeline

- Period: December 18, 2017 - February 2, 2018
- Frequency: once or twice a week depending on school's activities
- Duration: 1 hour for each workshop session

Exhibition and presentation

Students exhibited and presented their photographs with their own descriptions on January 30 - February 2 at the school.

Workshop Activities

#1

Project introduction: Sign assent forms

Group discussion: How students perceive the terms "urban" and "rural".

Homework: Write a reflection about their future career/work and where they want to live in relations to their perceptions of places being urban and/or rural.

#2

Lecture: Basic photography to set the stage for their photographic exploration

Workshop: Brainstorm and discussion on challenges and opportunities in living in the villages

Homework: Take photographs of the challenges and the opportunities within their communities.

#3

(G8) Presentation: On their photographic exploration and reflect on what they have encountered

(G9) Group workshop: Brainstorm on opportunities and challenges of living in their communities

#4

Workshop: Together rearrange keywords from workshop discussions and outputs onto a 4x4, where the x-axis represents opportunities to challenges and the y-axis displays levels of relevance to their life decision.

Homework: Choose a topic of interest from the challenges.

#5

Workshop: Students, grouped by their interested topics, have to fill a 3-column paper by the following sequence

1. Brainstorm on the challenges and opportunities within the topic.
2. Rearrange the challenges and opportunities by their relative importance.
3. From the most important topic, think about related constituents or stakeholders.
4. Think about where they can take photos of the topics.

Homework: Photographs those topics.

#6

Presentation: Each group talks about their photographic exploration and reflect on what they have encountered.

#7

Group discussion:

- What elements in "development" or in big cities do you not wish to see in your communities?
- How do you envision your communities in the next 10 years – 20 years?

#8

Revision: Individually, move different items on the 4x4 opportunities-challenges and relevance to life decision table. Why things should remain, why things should move?

#9 - Exhibition and presentation

Presentation: As groups, present their photo exhibition to other students.

Reflection: Individually, reflect on what they liked about this workshop and what they wish can be improved.

#10

Reflection: Individually, reflect on what they have learned from this workshop, and how this area should be like in the next 10-20 years.

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEWS

List of Interviewees

First name	*Last name*	*Nickname*	*Position*	*Office or area of responsibilities*
Panya	Pradapon	-	Chief Executive of the SAO	Tambon Pang Tawai Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO)
Peraphet	Pliakot	Phet	Deputy Chief Administrator	Tambon Pang Tawai Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO)
Ponsawan	Kanrean	Berm	Head of Tambon and Village	Tambon Pang Tawai and Ban Phet Mongkhon (moo 9)
Wirat	Sopimpa	-	Head of Village	Ban Phet Charoen (moo 3)
Sahat	Kaewyung	-	School Principal	Ban Phet Mongkhon School
Saowaluk	Techai	Sao	Teacher and Academic Affairs	Ban Phet Mongkhon School
Sarbkaew	Boonmee	Gai	Public Health Volunteer	Ban Phet Mongkhon (moo 9)

Interview Guide

Scope of work and development role

- What is your current position? How long have you been in this position? Do you also hold other positions, have side jobs or other commitments? If so, what are they?
- What is the area of your responsibility?
- What is the scope of your work under this position?
- Who do you answer to? Do you have a voice in tailoring the policy to best implementation it in your own area?
- Who do you work with the most?
- Are there any areas of overlapping work with other authorities? If so, what are they and which are some of the significant ones?

Basic information

- What is the population trend in the area? Do you have the census data? Has it grown, decreased, or stabilized?
- Where do most people come from?
- Do most people leave or stay put? Where do they go? Do they come back when they get older?
- What is the average income of the population here? (Annually or monthly)
- How many people are under poverty? How do you define poverty?
- What do most people do for a living?
- What are some of the odd jobs you know in this area?

Past development

- What have been the changes in the rural development trend in the past 10-20 years? Have the project types changes through time? If so, how and what are they?

Current projects and project financing

- What are on-going projects/development plans in this area? Where do the financial supports come from for each of these projects?
- What is the level of flexibility in financing and/or implementing a policy from above? Can you regroup different funding sources together for a project that serves the same purposes?
- Can you initiate your own projects locally? If so, how have you been financing such projects?

Current opportunities and challenges

- What do you think are the significant challenges in this area?
- What do you think are the significant opportunities in this area?

Future development

- How do you envision this community to become in the next 10 years? 20 years?
- If you have the voice and financial supports for local public policy, what do you think should be the development strategy in this area? How would you go about implementing it?

Extras

- Are there any other people you think I should interview?
- Are there other related groups in which I should get information from?

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