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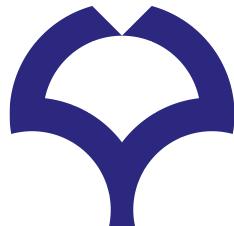
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Abstract

This research is an attempt to elucidate the contemporary role of Buddhist monks in development practice in northeast Thailand. I focus on so-called "development monks" and the changes that have characterized monastic development activism in recent decades in terms of both ideology and practice. I examine how shifts in the collaborative structure of localist development practice have reshaped development monks' understanding of locality and extralocality, and have led to a fundamental reimagining of the practices in which these monks engage.

The "development monk" movement began 1960s primarily as individual monks contesting the centralized development practices of the state and other non-local entities in favor of those that adhere more closely to Buddhist teachings. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, development monks began forming networks and collaborating with NGOs and activists in an effort to stave off "non-local" forces from interference in local development, thus, reasserting local authority, autonomy, and identity – an ideology that Parnwell (2007) has called "neolocalism." However, since the creation of the "People's Constitution" and the passage of the National Decentralization Act in the late 1990s, the Thai government has been adopting the language and symbols of localism in its development strategies. As a result, there has been a large-scale withdrawal of NGO support from monastic development practice and an increase in monastic collaboration with government entities. This, along with greater access to information and communication technology, have led to a shift in monastic development ideology and practice to what I call "networked localism." Unlike the neolocalist ideology practiced by earlier generations of development monks, networked localism attempts to re-appropriate the symbols and technologies of modernization and extra-locality in order to reassert the central role of the local within the context of increasing globalization.

Based on fieldwork conducted in northeast Thailand from 2013-2014, I focus on the work of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, a networked-localist development monk in Roi Et province. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has been working for the past twenty years to make his temple into a community center, outfitting it with various facilities such as an ICT center, a financial institution, and a children's learning center. I argue that these practices illustrate his attempt to position the temple as a network "hub," mediating local-extralocal connections in key spheres

of village life. Furthermore, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is active in extralocal collaborative endeavors, playing a key role in the formation and operation of several large-scale development monk networks. These kinds of networks have helped to codify monastic development activism as a *community of practice* and enable greater government collaboration with development monks. This increased government involvement, I argue, has created a practical and symbolic "infrastructure" that serves as the basis for future development activism. This, in turn, has resulted in the "channeling" of monastic development practice into state-initiated projects, which emphasize a nationalist narrative and village-level liability for the socioeconomic problems local residents face.

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I owe an extensive debt of gratitude to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, without whom this research would not have been possible. I could not have asked for a more willing, generous (in terms of both time and resources), knowledgeable, or enthusiastic key informant. Also thank you to Dr. Pinit Lapthananon of Chulalongkorn University for introducing me to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and for providing me with guidance when I had reached what appeared to be a dead-end in my research endeavors. I would also like to thank Dr. Maliwan Buranapatana and Itsarate Dolphen at Khon Kaen University for their expert support with regard to Thai language and culture, as well as Chayan Vaddhanaphuti of Chiang Mai University for his generous counsel. Additionally, thanks to all of my informants (both monks and laypeople) who lent their valuable time to help me with this project.

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1 Introduction

This research is an attempt to understand the contemporary role of Buddhism in development practice in northeast Thailand. I focus on so-called "development monks" and the changes that have characterized monastic development activism in recent decades in terms of both ideology and practice. Based on fieldwork I conducted in northeast Thailand from 2013-2016, I examine how shifts in the collaborative structure of localist development practice have reshaped development monks' understanding of locality and extralocality, and have led to a fundamental reimagining of the practices in which these monks engage.

1.1 Development Monks?

The "development monk" (*phrasong nak phatthana* or *phra nak phatthana*)[1] movement arose in Thailand in the late 1960's and early 1970's[2] after the Thai government embarked on a series of large-scale development policies and strategies – most notably the First National Economic and Social Development Plan – aimed primarily at economic growth and raising national GDP (Swearer, 1997; Thongyou 2004). Following the implementation of these policies, which emphasized resource centralization and the establishment of monoculture plantations, rural villages in Thailand (especially in the northern and northeastern regions) found themselves to

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[1] Pinit Lapthananon, one of the first scholars to offer in-depth research on development monks in northeast Thailand, has also referred to them as *phrasong phatthana* (1986, p. 10).

[2] A number of the monks with whom I spoke traced the tradition back much earlier, with some even suggesting that most monks in the past were actually development monks. While it is true that there were monks that would fit the definition of "development monk" that I employ here (for example, Luang Phu Hao of Roi Et province, credited with founding Prathumrat district), monastic development activism did not emerge as a distinct ideological movement until the 1960s-70s. It was during this time that these monks began to propose the adoption of development policies and practices based in Buddhist doctrine as an alternative to the more Western neoliberal model that was being implemented.

be confronted with a number of social, economic, and environmental problems including the accumulation of debt, greater income inequality, soil erosion, and deforestation (Rungwichaton & Udomittipong, 2001; Darlington 2003a). Attributing the problems they were seeing in their villages to these kinds of centralized development policies, development monks set out to contest this approach, which was being adopted by the state and other non-local entities (Nishikawa & Noda, 2001). These monks saw aspects of this top-down, market-driven development (such as the valorization of material wealth) as ideologically opposed to Buddhist teachings (Swearer, 1997; Nishikawa, 2001). They, thus, engaged in practices that promoted what they considered to be more Buddhist forms of development, often employing religious symbols and teachings. These practices have often taken the form, for example, of forest/tree ordinations[3], rice and buffalo banks[4], the creation of local currency[5], and so on. The movement has since gained momentum, garnering the support of NGOs, lay activists and, in some cases, government entities.

The question of how to explicitly define "development monk" is particularly problematic, as it has both taken on new connotations over time and is often used quite liberally to refer to monks who engage in a wide range of activities. These definitions also tend vary widely and are often contradictory. To make matters more complicated, although it was originally a term primarily applied retroactively by academics and analysts to monks engaged in the kinds of projects mentioned above, it has become part of the Thai lexicon and is now commonly employed by villagers, lay collaborators, and the monks themselves in a variety of

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[3] When a monk symbolically ordains a forest to prevent deforestation. See (Rungwichaton & Udomittipong, 2001; Darlington, 2003b; Delcore, 2004).

[4] Communal repositories of buffalo and rice to be distributed/loaned to villagers in need. See (Sivaraksa, 2000)

[5] See (Badiner, 2002; Parnwell, 2005)

ways. When I use the term here, I will be referring to Lapthananon's (2012a) definition as monks who "regularly engage in development activity[6] with villagers or the community in a way that effects their living conditions or way of life" (p. 7, translation mine). I exclude from this definition, as Lapthananon does, activities that are of a purely religious nature, such as temple expansion and the organization of religious ceremonies. This being said, the activist practices of development monks can hardly be called secular. These monks see the root cause of socioeconomic problems as the failure to adhere to Buddhist precepts and seek to address those issues through the application of religious teachings.

Although monks have had an active role in community development in Thailand for many decades, there has been surprisingly little academic literature published that focuses specifically on the development monk movement. Instead, development monks are often either relegated to brief examples/anecdotes or mentioned in passing in broader discussions of Thai Buddhism or community development in Thailand. Many other works (especially those published before the 1990s) discuss monastic involvement and Buddhism's role in social activism in Thailand while not explicitly using the term "development monk." Much of this earliest examples of this kind of research focused primarily on outlining the general ways in which Buddhist teachings can be applied to social/economic/development philosophy (Piker, 1973; Sivaraksa, 1975; Keyes, 1983). Much of the work published in the late 1980s to early 1990s on Buddhist activism similarly focused on the sociopolitical application of Buddhist teachings, but was written by activist scholars (often monks, themselves) (Sivaraksa 1987; Phongphit, 1988; Sivaraksa & Ginsburg, 1992). Especially influential during this period was

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[6] The term "community activism" may be a more accurate one than "development activities," as many of these monks engage in practices that would not typically be considered "development," (such as anti-drug/alcohol campaigns, etc.) but all my informants referred to this kind of activity as "development" (*phatthana*), so this is the term I will be using here as well.

Prayudh Payutto, a monk and intellectual whose seminal works included *Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems* (1987) and *Buddhist Economics* (*Sethasat Naeo Phut*) (2005[1988]), in which he detailed the problems with a Western economic system being adopted and implemented in Thailand and advocated for a uniquely Thai system based on Buddhist principles.[7] Pinit Lapthananon was one of the few scholars at the time who published ethnographic research looking at development monks as a movement and the projects they were implementing on the ground. His book, *Botbat Phrasong Nai Kanphatthana Chonabot* (The Role of Monks in Rural Development), an ethnographic account of development monks in northeast Thailand, helped set the stage for future scholarship on "development monks" as a phenomenon/movement in Thailand (1986).[8] In 1987, Somboon Suksamran, a colleague of Lapthananon also published a paper, "*Kanphatthana Tam Naew Phuthasasana: Korani Suksa Phra Nak Phatthana* (A Buddhist Approach to Development: A Case Study of Development Monks)" giving a broad overview and detailing the history of the movement, as well as explicitly using the term "*phra nak Phatthana*" (development monk) to refer to monastic development practitioners.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw a large uptake in academic books and articles about Thai development monks. It is important to note, however, most of the work published in the 2000s was based primarily on fieldwork/research conducted in the 1990s (meaning they described monks who were active during that period). While much of the work in the 1980s was theoretical and prescriptive regarding the connection between Buddhism and social development, much more research began to be published about how Buddhism was being applied by monks in actual development practice (Mayer, 1996; Izumi, 2000; Nishikawa, 2001;

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[7] I discuss this further in Chapter 5.

[8] Although he does not explicitly use the term, "development monk" here.

Nozaki, 2003; Sakurai, 2004, 2005, 2007; King, 2009). In addition, research during this period often focused on monks engaged in environmental work and monks collaborating with NGOs. The former both detailed the theoretical connection between environmentalism and Buddhist philosophy (Lancaster, 1997; Swearer, 1997; Henning, 2002). and framed monastic development activism as arising out of the environmental destruction wrought by deforestation and the shift to monoculture plantations that accompanied Thailand's centralized development policies (Sponsel & Natadecha-Sponsel, 1997; Udomittipong, 2000; Nishikawa & Noda, 2001; Rungwichaton & Udomittipong 2001; Parnwell, 2006). Central to this portrayal of monks as environmentalists was the tree ordination ceremony (in which a monk would symbolically ordain a tree in order to prevent deforestation), brought to the forefront by Susan Darlington (1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2009), which many scholars saw as a concrete example of how traditional Buddhist practices could be applied to contest environmentally destructive development practices. Later work on this ritual, including that of Darlington, herself, became more critical of its implications (especially as the ritual came to be adopted and implemented state) (Tannenbaum, 2000; Isager & Ivarsson, 2002; Delcore, 2004; Darlington, 2012). Other scholarship during this time focused on monks' collaboration with NGOs and other activists (Pfirrmann & Kron, 1992; Akaishi, 2001; Delcore, 2003; Sakurai, 2008). Of these, the most influential to this paper was Parnwell's work on the movement that he called "neolocalism" that was prominent among development monks, NGOs, and other activists in Thailand (2007). He described this as an attempt to relocalize development, "clawing back" local control over the development process (Parnwell, 2005, Parnwell & Seeger, 2008).

There has been exceedingly little research on monastic development activism conducted after the 1990s. One exception is Lapthananon's *Development Monks in Northeast*

Thailand (2012b), which includes research he conducted in 2003-2004, and describes the beginning of the trends in monastic development practice that I will describe here. In addition there has been some recent scholarship conducted by monks in monastic universities (master's and doctoral theses) who have participated in existing projects at other temples and in development-monk networks (Bamphen, 2006; Oupakutto, 2013).

1.2 In Search of Development Monks

Before setting out to conduct my fieldwork, I had extensively reviewed the academic literature on development monks, which spanned over four decades and upon which I had based my master's thesis (Southard, 2011). I was, thus, confident that I possessed thorough knowledge of the subject and of the kinds of projects in which these monks were engaged. What I found when I began preliminary field research in northeast Thailand both surprised me and forced me to reassess my understanding of contemporary monastic development activism in Thailand.

When I arrived in Khon Kaen province in early 2013, a lecturer at the local university put me in touch with a group of activists who had been working for decades in local development, both individually and as part of various localist NGOs. These activists had, for the most part, been involved in the "Community Culture" movement in the 1990s (in which development monks had been highly involved), which primarily fought against government development policy in order to protect the autonomy and identity of local communities.[9] Most of them told me that they had worked with development monks in the past, but only one (I will call him G here) knew of any current projects in which monks were involved. G accompanied me on a number of temple visits around the Isan (northeast) area, including that of Luang Pho Nan, one

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[9] I discuss this movement in more detail in Chapters 2 and 5.

of the most famous development monks in the northeast. However, out of all of the monks we visited, only one – a monk I will refer to as Phra S of Loei province (discussed in Chapter 2) – remained active. I also met with Sulak Sivaraksa (a renowned activist in favor of Buddhism-centered development who has written extensively on the activities of development monks in previous decades) and Phra Paisal Visalo (a leader in the development monk movement in past decades), both of whom explained to me that the development monk movement had, for the most part, faded into the past and that very few of the monks remained active. However, I had heard that Dr. Pinit Lapthananon, a scholar at Chulalongkorn University had published a book (2012b) about development monks in the northeast just a few months prior, and I sent him an email asking to meet. He generously agreed, and I thus made the seven-hour bus ride to his office in Bangkok. The development monk movement that Dr. Lapthananon described was not only still active, but was also currently engaged in collaboration in and mobilization of resources toward monastic development projects at an unprecedented scale. He provided me with a directory he had compiled of development monks in the northeast (Lapthananon, 2012a), including their profiles and contact information, and suggested that I begin by visiting Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun in Roi Et province.

The drive from where I was staying in Khon Kaen to *Wat* Phothikaram (Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple), took about three to four hours. Roi Et is a primarily rural province and *Wat* Phothikaram is located about 90 minutes outside of the capital city in Pathumrat district. Upon meeting Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, I was immediately struck by his jovial demeanor. While monks with whom I had previously conducted interviews had mostly come off as solemn and contemplative, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun exuded joyful excitement. He smiled broadly and spoke about his work with obvious enthusiasm, escorting me around the temple and often peppering his answers to my questions with playful metaphors punctuated

with bouts of contagious laughter. The younger monks in the temple were equipped with cameras and hovered around us snapping photographs for the duration of the interview (which were uploaded to social media that evening). By the end of the meeting we had already made arrangements for several more visits, both to *Wat* Phothikaram and to temples of other development monks in the region with whom Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun often collaborated. It was then understood why Dr. Lapthananon had advised me to begin my field research with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun. His active enthusiasm for promotion and collaboration made him an ideal gateway into the projects and networks that make up the contemporary landscape of monastic development practice (in which he plays a central role). Throughout my time in the field, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun proved invaluable as both informant and go-between. His penchant for promotion and fastidious recordkeeping meant that he always provided me with a wealth of information/documentation regarding the details of various projects and the structure and composition of the various development monk networks and associations. In addition, not only would he alert me to upcoming events and meetings involving development monks, he would also take it upon himself to introduce me to the monks in attendance and persuade them to sit for interviews. This allowed me to experience firsthand what participation in these large-scale development-monk networks entails, in addition to merely observing the various projects being implemented on the ground.

I was surprised to find, that contemporary development monks and their practices vary in important ways from those about whom and about which I had read. Looking back, I realize that most of the seminal academic research on the subject had been conducted in the 1980s and 90s and that much of the more recently published research profiled monks that were most active in previous decades and had either become less involved over the years or abandoned social activism altogether. However, although there have been drastic changes in development monks'

methods and practices over the years, monastic involvement in social activism is more prevalent than it has ever been. The term "development monk" has become widely known within the Sangha and is now most often applied by the monks, themselves, rather than the academics who study them. These monks have also formed regional and national networks, actively collaborating with lay activists and government entities, and are highly involved in the creation and implementation of development policy at the village level. Despite this, there has been practically no academic attention to these new trends in monastic development activism. This research is, thus, an attempt to understand the changes in this movement that have taken place over the past two decades and to better understand the ideologies and practices of contemporary development monks.

In order to fully accomplish this and to allow for a deeper contextual understanding of these monks' practices and the ideology that informs them, I examine contemporary monastic development practice from the prospective of the development monks, themselves.[10] I look specifically at practices in northeast Thailand (Isan),[11] and center my research around the activities of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun (described above). I chose to focus on Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun because (1) he is extraordinarily active in the development monk community, playing a central role in the creation and maintenance of several prominent development monk networks, (2) he is engaged in a wide variety of activities, encompassing most of those in which contemporary development monks are primarily involved, (3) he is an active collaborator, seeking cooperation and expertise from government agencies, civil activists, and lay experts, in addition to other monks, and (4) he has been central in advocating for monastic social

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[10] However, future ethnographic research from the perspective of the villagers who are the targets of these projects or the lay-organizations with whom development monks collaborate would no doubt prove invaluable to providing a more complete understanding of contemporary monastic development practice.

[11] *Isan* is the name given to the 20 provinces that make up the northeast region of Thailand near the Laotian and Cambodian borders.

engagement, helping to shape the ways in which the category of "development monk" is understood, defined, and translated into a concrete system of ideology and practice.
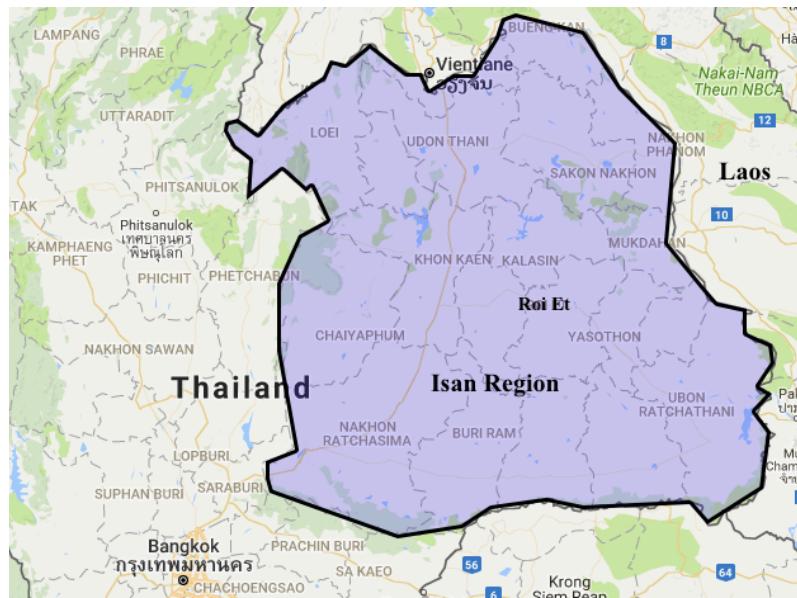
Figure 1.1 - A map of the *Isan* Region[12]

1.3   Chapter Layout

Chapter 2 is aimed at giving a contextual overview of the kinds of changes that have occurred in monastic development activism in recent years. I argue that a shift in government attitudes and policies toward localism in Thailand in the past two decades (specifically the trend toward state localism) and the subsequent withdrawal of localist NGOs from development monks' projects has significantly altered the landscape of monastic development practice (as well as localist activism more generally) in Thailand. I characterize this shift as one from neolocalism (Parnwell, 1997) to what I am calling "networked localism." The former seeks to undo the delocalization that has occurred in the past 50 years and reestablish a the more locally-centered models and practices of the past, primarily by attempting to stave off "non-local" forces from interference in local development. Networked localism, on the other

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[12] Map data ©2016 Google

hand, attempts to re-appropriate the symbols and technologies of modernization and extra-locality in order to reassert the role of locality within the context of increasing globalization. My aim here is to both explore how this latter movement came about and to illustrate the ideological and practical contrast between it and neolocalism in order to serve as a jumping-off point for further ethnographic exploration of networked localism as it is manifest on the ground.

Chapter 3 explores how networked localist development practices are manifest at the village level. I give an ethnographic account of the projects being implemented by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun in his community. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has been working for the past twenty years to make his temple into a community center, outfitting it with various facilities such as an ICT center, a financial institution, and a children's learning center. I argue that this temple-as-community-center is an example of the mobilization of extralocal/supermodern symbols and resources in order to both grant villagers access to the extralocal and to simultaneously embed these in the localist values of community, history, and identity. He does this by making his temple a network "hub," mediating and facilitating local-extralocal interaction in the realms of technology, economy, and education.

In Chapter 4, I delve into the collaborative aspect of networked localist monastic development practice, focusing on the two largest development monk networks in the Isan area, the Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization and Development Monks for Society. The former is an Isan-based network of development monks consisting of regional and provincial subnetworks created to allow members to share resources and strategies for implementing development projects in their respective villages. The latter network is a national organization of monks who represent the Foundation for Dharma

Deliberative Development, which was created in order to provide funding for development monks around the country to use in the implementation of their projects. I argue that networks like these have led to development monks becoming a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in which practitioners hone their skills, and shared meanings, reifications, and understandings of legitimate peripheral participation are negotiated and reproduced. I give accounts of a regional development monk meeting and an exhibition/recruitment event to demonstrate how this process occurs *in situ*.

In Chapter 5, I offer a critique of the kind of state-led localism that has come to define development monks' networked localist endeavors. With the rise of networked localism, and the Thai government having adopted the language and symbols of localism in its own development strategies, the state has come to play a central role in development-monk networks and projects. I argue that this has led to the creation of kind of a practical and symbolic "infrastructure" that serves as the basis for future development activism. This has resulted in the channeling of monastic development practice into state-initiated projects at the exclusion of others. Furthermore, this collaborative shift has resulted in a change of focus - away from the perceived systematic "moral" failings of system-level development practices, policies, and ideology to the creation of "moral communities" from which it is assumed that material development will naturally spring. This, in turn, equates failure to develop with moral failings at the village level, while ignoring the larger system-level problems of which these may be more symptom than cause.

A word on transliteration

For the most part I use the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS) for the romanization of Thai words. Although the system is far from perfect, as it is full of ambiguities

(particularly with regard to tone and vowel length), it is the most common form of transliteration and is used for official names of places, etc. Thus, for the sake of consistency, I have chosen to use it here, as well. The only exceptions are when the name of something/someone to which/whom I am referring has an official romanized form that differs from the RTGS transliteration.

2 The Changing Roles of Development Monks – Networked Localism and Depoliticization

As I state in the introduction, much of the academic literature on development monks in Thailand has been focused on those who were most active in previous decades, monks who were in large part engaged in very different kinds of activism than are those practicing today. There has been a large-scale shift in the ideological underpinnings of monastic development work in the past decades, which have in turn, shaped the nature of development monks' practices. In this chapter, I examine the historical context that has given rise to these changes and compare the kind of ideology that is prominent among development monks today with that of those most often portrayed in previous academic literature. I argue that this shift is best described as a reimagining of how *localism* is understood and practiced in the monastic development context. Since the 1960s, localism has been a driving force in Thai alternate development, a movement in which development monks have played a major role. I define localism here an ideology that is primarily concerned with protecting and/or reclaiming the relevance, power, and autonomy of the local within the context of centralization and globalization. I characterize this shift as one from *neolocalism* (Parnwell, 2007) being the primary language of localist development discourse to a trend toward what I am calling *networked localism.* The former focuses primarily on defending the local community from non-local and modernizing forces, advocating instead to a return to an often idealized past. Networked localism, on the other hand, attempts to re-appropriate the symbols and technologies of modernization and globalization in order to reassert the role of locality within this new context.

In the first section, I begin with brief account of the historical context in which this shift has taken place. I argue that the shift is due in large part to the Thai government adopting an ostensibly localist stance with regard to development rhetoric and policy, which has crowded the (frequently anti-government) neolocalist NGOs and activists out from monastic development activism. This has, in turn, led to development monks working more closely with state and other extralocal actors, shedding many of the core tenants of neolocalist ideology. The rest of the chapter focuses on the nature of the networked localist ideology, especially with regard to the ways in which it contrasts with that of neolocalism, in terms of both the practice itself and the role of the monk within it. Thus, I will be looking at how (1) the appropriate/obligatory roles of the monk in activist practices and (2) notions of localism, locality, and their relation to the extralocal are differently conceived from each of these ideological standpoints. I root the former in the notion of politicality. As the political is a realm in which monks are forbidden to participate, understanding the differing ways in which these monks locate their practices to escape the ascription of politicality reveals the monastic capacity in which they primarily understand themselves to be acting. Finally, I will attempt to clarify the ways each of these ideological standpoints frames the notions of locality and community in relation to non-local, extralocal, and global symbols and systems. In order to illustrate this contrast, I will frequently refer to two development monks, Phra S and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, whose differing practices I consider representative of these two larger movements in Thai alternative development activism. This serves as a the jumping-off point from which I can begin to explore and critique the networked localist endeavor, a project to which I will devote the rest of chapters in this dissertation.

2.1   The Shift from Neolocalism to State Localism in Thailand

The Thai localist movement began to gain traction after the Thai government's First National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) came in to effect in 1961.[1] This plan was predicated on the idea that rapid modernization was crucial for the nation and could be achieved through the centralization and unification of development practices throughout the country. Since then, there has been a groundswell of NGOs and other activists advocating for the re-localization of these practices. This movement reached its peak with the "Community Culture" [wattanatam chumchom] movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Nartsupha, 2001; Thongyou 2004), which, in addition to advocating for development rooted in local identity, was an attempt to ascertain and codify exactly what constituted "identity" and "locality" (Southard, 2011). The ideology behind this push is generally referred to as "localism," as it sees as desirable development goals and methods tailored to the specific needs and identities of local communities, who are the target of the practices (Hewison, 1999; Connors, 2001).

In this section, I will briefly outline the shift in trajectory that has taken place in localist practice and discourse in Thailand over the past several decades. At its heart, development monasticism in Thailand has been a localist movement, the practitioners of which have often worked hand-in-hand with other localist activists and organizations in devising and implementing their projects. There has, thus, been a corresponding shift in monastic development, at both the practical and ideological levels. For the NGOs and lay activists, this change has been that from a primarily anti-state and anti-centralization model to one that attempts to work with and through the district, provincial, and national government in order to enact policies that they see as being consistent with localist values. For development monks this meant moving from a model of collaboration with "neolocalist" (described below) NGOs

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[1]   *Phaen   Phatthana   Sethakit   Le   Sangkhom   Chabap   Thi   Nung,* available at http://www.rpu.ac.th/Library_web/doc/e-book_T/plan1.pdf

to contest modernization and centralization in development practices (particularly those enacted by the state) to one characterized by large-scale development-monk networks who work closely with government offices and so-called "government NGOs," a process from which more traditional NGOs are largely absent. I argue that this is primarily the result of the Thai government taking on a decidedly more localist posture, couching projects and policy in symbols and rhetoric that have traditionally been associated with the localist movement. This appropriation of the localist mantle has led to a large-scale reduction in the participation of neolocalist NGOs and activists in monastic development practice, which has, in turn, paved the way for these new practical and ideological approaches.

2.1.1 Neolocalism and the Community Culture movement

As mentioned above, the localist movement in Thailand has typically been characterized by resistance to development models that emphasize centralization and modernization over the protection of local autonomy and what they understand to be traditional cultural identity. Parnwell uses the term "neolocalism" to describe this particular form of localism practiced by development monks, NGOs and other alternative development activists in northeast Thailand. He describes neolocalism as a "'back to the future' perspective" (2007, 1005), in that:

> many of the referent elements upon which the movement is based have their roots
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> in situations, practices, and moral codes that prevailed (sometimes more imagined
>
> than real) in the past, which both local and external activists are seeking to
>
> rekindle and remodel (ibid, 998).[2]

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[2] For more on the ways in which Thai NGOs and activists attempt to invoke an idealized past as a model for development objectives (cf. Delcore, 2003).

I will use this term here, then, to refer to the type of localism that seeks specifically to undo the delocalization that has been taking place for the past 50 years and return to the state its proponents see as existing prior to it.

Many of the development monks and lay activists with whom I spoke expressed a decidedly neolocalist point of view.[3] When I asked the former head of NGO-COD (NGO Coordinating Committee on Development - a prominent umbrella organization that links NGOs working in alternative development throughout the country) about his goals for development in Northeast Thailand, he said that it was necessary to return rural Thailand to its previous state – before the government-led development push was instated. He spoke of the time prior to this period as being one of self-sufficiency and one in which villagers' lives were guided by Buddhist values. He contrasted this with the rampant consumerism that was brought about by Western development models and that characterizes the cultural landscape in rural Thailand today (personal communication, February 25, 2013).

This ideology reached its peak in the early 1990s with the "Community Culture" (*watthanatham chumchon*) school of development activism. The crux of this movement was the idea that each "community has its own culture" (Nartsupha 1991, p. 119), separate from that of the state. Thus, it favored the implementation of development strategies congruous with local culture, as opposed to centralized "one size fits all" development practices and policies (Thongyou, 2004). However, developing and advocating for these kinds of strategies required the creation of what Wilk (1995) refers to as a "structure of common difference" (p. 118) -

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[3] However, most of these practitioners were either no longer active or had significantly reduced the scale of their practices, as I describe below and in subsequent chapters.

guidelines that determine what constitutes legitimate cultural expression by which local culture can be objectified as a bounded entity (see Cohn, 1987). In other words, it was within the purview of these NGOs and academics to decide exactly what counted as "local culture" or "local identity." In this case, because Community Culture was a movement contesting state development policies, local culture and identity were to be defined in contrast to national culture and identity (see Southard, 2011). It is clear from this that neolocalism - being a form of resistance whose ideals are defined by those to which they are opposed - is inherently negative. Its goals are defined by what it regards as problematic about the scaling up and centralization of rural development. Practitioners, thus, work to essentially turn back the clock to an era remembered through the refutation of present circumstances. For the neolocalists, as Taylor (2008) writes, globalization "in some sense became a much feared word, one that challenges the bases of local values and culture" (p. 14).

Until the late 1990s, monastic development activism in Thailand was primarily based on this neolocalist perspective, in that it was focused on the refutation of both specific state-led development policies and the general centralization and marketization of development. The development monk movement also emerged in response to the institution of the First NESDP, the implementation of which they see as being responsible for increasing social, economic and environmental problems in rural villages, such as the destruction of community forests, villagers' growing financial debt, and the loss of community identity. They viewed these troubles as resulting from neoliberal development strategies that valorized qualities, such as greed, materialism, and secularization, which they considered to be contrary to Buddhist teachings and traditions (Swearer, 1997).

2. The Changing Roles of Development Monks

Development monks have, thus, often found themselves in conflict with the state and the subjects of criticism. These monks, especially those working in the realm of economic environmental activism, were often viewed as engaging in political activity unbefitting of their positions. Although the monks mostly refrained from making explicit political statements (Darlington, 1998), any activism aimed at contesting (or promoting) state economic or environmental policy unavoidably takes on a political dimension. Thus, as Darlington writes, much of the criticism leveled at development monks stemmed from the belief that "the Sangha's role should be strictly in the spiritual realm, keeping clear of political and economic issues" (1998, p. 5). In some cases, development monks were subject to retaliation by individuals and state and corporate entities, who felt the monks had overstepped their boundaries. Taylor (1993) gives the example of Phra Prajak, who came up against fierce resistance to his forest conservation efforts (consisting of public campaigns, sit-ins, tree ordinations, etc.), including arrest, military intervention, and death threats, ending with him disrobing and leaving the monastic order amid political scandal (Jackson, 1997).

The 1980s and 90s saw a rise in interest among activists and NGOs in alternative development (Rigg, 1997) practices rooted in neolocalist ideology. With the emergence of the Community Culture movement, it then became necessary to ascertain and codify exactly what constituted "identity" and "locality." Development monks often served as primary referents in this endeavor due to their sharing similar goals with these extralocal NGOs, while simultaneously being embedded in the local community (Southard, 2011). Thus, there grew widespread collaboration among development monks and localist NGOs, many of whom were associated with political opposition to the state and its policies (Darlington, 1998). All of these factors served to root monastic development in neolocalist ideology and to create a public perception of development monks as political actors in conflict with the Thai government.

Although the neolocalism that Parnwell describes is still a prevalent ideology in some circles of development activists in Thailand today, it is not nearly as relevant as it once was. It can be argued that, in many ways, the success of the movement led to its ultimate downfall. As Shigetomi (2004) points out, the aftermath of the 1990s' political upheaval saw a greater amount of participation from these NGOs, academics and other sectors civil society in government development strategies and policy-making. The result was a convergence of Community Culture and state local development ideology – the result of which resembled the latter (state ideology) more than the former, at least with regard to how local culture was to be understood and articulated.

Following the political and economic turmoil of the late 1990s and subsequent government restructuring, however, the relationships among many development monks and state entities shifted. The Tambon (subdistrict) Administration Organizations (TAO) were created in 1996, with the intention of decentralizing state control over rural development (Parnwell, 2005). Following this, the 1997 "People's Constitution" and the 1999 National Decentralization Act further embraced the localist perspective and attempted to incorporate alternative development NGOs and local actors into state development practices (Kelly et al., 2012). During this time, King Bhumibol also publicly advocated for locally oriented sustainable development practice rooted in a Buddhist worldview, further mainstreaming and legitimizing the practices of development monks (Royal Project Development Board, 1997; Renard, 2010). According to the website for the nationwide development-monk network, the Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development (discussed in detail in Chapter 4),

The work of many development monks has come to be accepted by communities, society, and government institutions to a greater extent than in the past. [These monks used to be] seen as unorthodox and becoming involved in worldly affairs ... Presently, it has begun to become evident that the work of many [development] monks is a way to spread religion to all types of people (translation mine).[4]

Many development monks began collaborating with government entities directly in their projects and, as a result, NGOs began to withdraw and play lesser roles in monastic development (Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, personal communication, April 28, 2014). Development monks, for the most part, moved from an arena of conflict with the state to one of collaboration, acting as go-betweens among government entities and villagers. This has had far-reaching implications for the movement, both in terms of the kinds of projects that are implemented and the ideological framework that underlies them.

2.1.2   The crowding out of development NGOs from localist development practice

Shigetomi's (2004) "Space Model" of NGO involvement in development is useful in making sense of the general withdrawal of NGOs critical of or unaffiliated with government projects from development monks' activities. He imagines NGOs as working within economic and political "spaces" – the gaps within these spheres that are unmanaged or managed only loosely by the government, the community, or the market. Of these, Shigetomi pays particular attention to the state as a defining agent in the possible range of NGO activity and details three major factors - two in the economic sphere and one in the political - that can hamper NGO activity.

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[4] http://www.สังฆะเพื่อสังคม.com, accessed November, 2016

The economic "spaces" in which NGOs operate are the areas concerning the distribution of resources that are not tightly controlled by the state. From the economic perspective, he argues that two major factors currently determine the space in which NGOs work. The first is declining foreign investment as Thailand begins to be perceived as a developed country and the other is an increase in government distribution of resources. While the former serves to shrink the economic space of NGOs, the latter has the effect of both expanding opportunities for NGO collaboration and hampering NGO autonomy. It allows, he writes, for NGOs to "have more space to act as [the government's] agent rather than as critical resource distributers. The group seeking participation in governance may find that it has a wide space as long as it is not critical of the government" (p. 57). In addition to the economic factors, control over the distribution of resources has vast political implications. Thus, as Shigetomi points out, even in a situation in which there is plenty of space in the economic realm, state domination of the political realm can just as effectively restrict the economic activities of NGOs. In the case of Thailand, he argues that the Thaksin regime's relatively aggressive stance regarding political dissidents had the effect of limiting the "political space" in which the NGOs were able to function.

From the monastic perspective, my informants also speculated that political opposition and increased government involvement (also, to a lesser extent, NGOs moving their activities abroad) as responsible for the decline of NGO support for monks' development projects. Phrakhru Phaisal Visalo (a prominent development monk in Chayaphum Province), for example, cited - in addition to a lack of funding – government resistance as a reason for the reduced role of NGOs in his development work: "During the Thaksin administration there were policies put into place that restricted the freedom of NGOs that did not agree with the government, especially those that work with rural communities" (personal communication,

December 18, 2014). The reason the majority of my development monk informants cited, however, was the presence of government support. Phrakhru Sangkhrak Chatwuti of Ubon Ratchathani province, who has worked primarily on projects promoting economic self-sufficiency and environmental conservation, talks about NGO involvement in his work this way:

> Presently NGOs have a much lesser role [in monastic development]. It is not like it was in the past…we would collaborate with NGOs, for example, in ordaining forests, growing trees, and reviving forests…now it is the role of the government to take care of the forests and try to restore them (personal communication, July 29, 2013).

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, the Roi Et development monk with whom I conducted the majority of my fieldwork, attributes this decline in NGO support as being due to the creation of the TAO (Tambon Administration Organization) and its involvement in local development activities. "When the state is close by," he says, "they come in and have a role and this results in NGOs having less of a role in working with monks. However, there are still some left [that do]" (personal communication, April 25, 2014). As examples, he gave the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (*Samnakngan khong Thun Sanap Sanun Kan Sangsoem Sukhaphap*, THPF) and the Stop Drink Network (*Samnakngaan Khrueakhai Onggon Ngod Lao*), both of which are actually government organizations (although they are structured like NGOs) that campaign against drinking, smoking, and drugs.[5] The NGOs and civil activist organizations I did encounter during my fieldwork were all supported to a large extent by these Government NGOs, which seemed to be involved in every dimension of contemporary monastic

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[5] More about these groups in later chapters.

development work. According to my informants, it was primarily after 2006-2007 that these organizations became especially important in defining the development landscape. Ungpakorn (2009) argues that ill-will on the part of localist NGOs garnered by Thaksin's combative rural development policies had led many of these organizations to side with the conservative royalists (yellow shirts) in the 2006 protests and subsequently support the military during and following the ensuing coup. Thus, many of the NGOs that had not been crowded out of localist development work entirely found themselves working with the military government on projects largely funded by organizations such as the THPF. The result was a blurring of the lines between Government NGOs and civil society, making it nearly impossible at times to distinguish between the two.

* * *

There has been a clear shift in the practices of development monks in Thailand, one which coincides with similar changes that have occurred in localist development practice as a whole. With the state's increased focus on decentralization and "bottom-up" development combined with the large-scale withdrawal of neolocalist NGOs from monastic development practice, it has gone from being a movement contesting local development led by the state or other non-local entities to one that actively collaborates with the state in its endeavors. There has, in turn, been a shift in development monks' relationship with the political. In the next section I discuss in detail changes that have come about with regard to this political dimension - both in terms of how perceptions of development monks' political involvement has changed, as well as changes in how development monks understand political activism.

2.2   Phra S and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun

In this chapter I will often refer to two development monks, one of whom I see as being representative of neolocalist tradition in monastic development and the other of the recent trend of networked localism. Phra[6] S represents the former, as he roots his activist practices in the effort to stop non-local intrusion into local development and is highly influenced by the anti-centralization Community Culture movement of the early 1990s. I chose Phra S as an example here as he was the only currently active development monk in the neolocalist tradition I encountered in the northeast. Although my time with Phra S was limited, his example serves to illustrate the traditional neolocalist point of view, the comparison of which to what I will call networked localism is the jumping-off point for this paper as a whole. In the following chapters I will be focusing primarily on Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and the movement of networked localism, which I argue defines contemporary monastic development practice in northeast Thailand. However, Phra S serves as a illustrative counter-example to the current trend in monastic development, which will be useful in understanding this shift.

2.2.1   A Neolocalist Development Monk - Phra S

As I write in chapter one, I began the preliminary stages of my fieldwork by seeking out development monks about whom I had read accounts in the academic literature. However, I soon found that these monks were, for the most part, no longer active in development work. Those who were had reduced the scope of their activities to such an extent that development activism could no longer be considered a defining characteristic of their monastic practice. At one point, I came into contact with G, an activist who has worked with localist NGOs and development monks over the past three decades.[7] G also asserted that the number of practicing

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[6] "*Phra,*" literally translates as "monk" and is the general honorific used when referring to monks by name. "*Phrakhru,*" meaning "teacher monk" is used in reference to monks with a higher position in the ecclesiastic order.

[7] As he is involved in a wide-range of projects and has no affiliation to any official organization, he jokingly refers to himself as an "NGI"(= Non-government individual).

development monks had dwindled significantly in recent years. The only one he was aware of was Phra S, who was working with villagers to block the construction of a goldmine in Loei province.

Phra S is the abbot at *Wat* B in P village, which is currently at the center of the protest mentioned above. He was originally ordained in Nakhon Sawan Province in the northern region of Thailand. He subsequently embarked on his *thudong* (Buddhist pilgrimage)[8] looking for a peaceful environment in which to continue his practice. He stayed for a time in Phitsanulok and Tak Province, but eventually heard about a small rural village (P Village) in Loei Province, the temple (*Wat* B) of which had been abandoned for some time. He has now been the abbot of *Wat* B for nearly 16 years. Although he has engaged in more traditional alternative development practices (community rice banks, etc.) in the past, his recent activities have focused primarily on opposing the goldmine construction in a mountain near the village.

In 2004, Tungkum, Ltd. (TKL) finished construction of the goldmine in question in the L Mountains near P Village. According to a report by the Peace and Human Rights Center of Northeast Thailand (PHRC), within two years of the gold mine's construction the villagers in the area began to experience severe health problems. Subsequent blood tests found that of 279 villagers tested, 34 had dangerously high levels of cyanide in their bloodstreams. Further tests were conducted, but the results were not publicly released.[9] However, the government issued a statement warning villagers not to drink water from local sources or use it for food preparation.

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[8] See (Pruess, 1976) for more information on Buddhist pilgrimage in Thailand

[9] G was quick to point out that the government receives 10 percent of the profits from the gold extracted in tax revenue, and thus, has a vested interest in keeping the results under wraps.

The same year, TKL announced its intention to construct a second mine in the same vicinity. In response, approximately 1,000 people from seven nearby villages formed the protest group, *Krum Khon Rak Ban Koed* (People Who Conserve their Hometown) (PHRC, 2008). Since its inception, the group has been working to oppose the construction of the new mine by organizing protests, staging sit-ins at government buildings to prevent the TKL corporation from completing the required environmental scoping process, and barricading roads so as not to allow the company's trucks to pass through. Their latest endeavor before the military recently stepped in had been an attempt to draft a law that would prohibit heavy trucks from the using local roads, making it effectively impossible for gold removed from the mines to be transported out of the area. Since this movement's inception, Phra S has acted as primary advisor to the villagers opposing the mine. According to group leaders, they meet with Phra S on a daily basis to discuss strategy and develop concrete plans of action. However, he prefers to remain anonymous, working in the background and allowing the villagers to be the face of the movement.[10]

My research with Phra S and P village took place over the course of several visits in ranging from three to seven days in length in 2013 and early 2014. On each occasion, I accompanied G on the journey from Khon Kaen and spent most of my time in the village with him as he held meetings with group leaders and held training sessions for the villagers in order to train them regarding strategies for engaging in effective activism. These meetings were held either in the village temple or the largest house in the village, the patio of which often doubled as the village's public meeting space. I stayed with G in a small raised hut the villagers had constructed for him as a temporary dwelling place during his visits. Because I was always

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[10] G and several of the villagers involved told me that this was also because he did not want to be perceived by outsiders as overstepping his bounds by acting outside of his duty as a monk.

traveling with G, all of my visits took place as anti-mining activities were being planned and implemented. As Phra S was reluctant to be seen engaging in the anti-mine project, he never took part in any of these meetings, training sessions, or subsequent demonstrations. At times when the temple space and equipment were being used for anti-goldmine activities, the monk would retreat into his quarters or visit a monk in a nearby village (who was also sympathetic to the plight of the villagers, but was even more reluctant to engage directly). Thus, the field data I gathered regarding Phra S came solely from interviews with him and accounts given by G and the villagers.

The temple is located on a steep incline overlooking the houses in the village. While in the village, I made daily visits to the temple to conduct interviews with Phra S. During the first of such interviews, which I conducted unaccompanied by anyone involved in the movement, Phra S denied any involvement with the protest activities and was careful to only speak in general terms about monastic activism. On several subsequent occasions, however, G (whom Phra S knew had been coming to aid the villagers in the anti-mining activities for the past several years) accompanied me to the temple and Phra S spoke more freely about his views regarding the construction of the goldmine and participation in *Krum Khon Rak Ban Koed*. After I had conducted a few of these kinds of interviews, he was more candid about his involvement, even on occasions when I went alone to the temple.[11]

After the coup in 2014, I was unable to conduct any further interviews, however, as the military had moved into the village and I was told I would not be allowed to enter. In early 2015, I was able to speak briefly with some of the villagers at a panel on human rights held in

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[11] The activists were highly concerned about company spies, whom they claim to have discovered on multiple occasions.

Khon Kaen province by some of the activists involved in the anti-goldmine protest. They told me that they were still involved in the resistance movement, albeit employing less ostentatious methods (i.e. seeking legal counsel, etc., rather than staging protest demonstrations), despite the military presence and physical attacks on the protestors by people they assume to be company henchmen.

2.2.2   A Networked Localist Development Monk – Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun[12]

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was ordained in 1989 in his home village of Ban Pho Noi in the northeast province of Roi Et at Wat Phothikaram, where he continues to practice today. Seeing the poverty in his village and the outmigration of the youth that was taking place, he felt obligated to contribute to the development of the area. In 1995, he began a program helping villagers to find work within the community. He opened a training facility in the *wat* to teach typing, computer operation, sewing, and other marketable skills he saw the villagers as lacking. In 1999, he created a program to train villagers the basics of Information and Communication Technology (ICT - using the internet, sending email, etc.). This program has continued to expand, and in 2007 he collaborated with the Thai Ministry of Information and Communication Technology to open an ICT center in his temple. Since then he has worked with monks, politicians and lay activists in other villages, helping them open similar computer training centers in other temples in the area. He has turned his temple into a community center, including a co-op convenience store, a community bank, a classroom for teaching weekend classes to local school children, and other facilities, which I describe in more detail in the following chapter. He has also helped establish a system through which villagers can receive

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[12] Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was the development monk with whom I spent the greatest amount time and, as such, is the development monk to whose practices have devoted the bulk of this dissertation. As this chapter primarily serves as an introduction to the networked-localist ideology, I will reserve more in-depth description for the chapters that follow.

supplemental income by making small dolls and key chains, which are sold nationally through the government's OTOP (One Village One Product)[13] program and internationally online. He also works with the villagers to produce and distribute honey and riceberry rice, which are also sold through OTOP.

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun describes his role as a monk in development activism as that of a facilitator. He says that monks have the ability to work at every level of society and are, thus, in an ideal position to create networks through which people, knowledge, and resources can be mobilized. Accordingly, he is intimately involved in the creation and maintenance of networks among villagers, government officials, lay activists and volunteers, and other development monks. According to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, he is currently involved in at least five[14] active development monk networks (*khruakhai*), on which I will elaborate further in chapter 3. He is also assiduous in recording his activities and promoting them via social media sites like Facebook and YouTube. All of this, he says, allows for strategic collaboration on projects and ideas. In addition, it is a way for activists or potential activists in other villages to see what his village is doing and possibly implement similar projects in ways that best suit their specific needs.[15]

2.3   Defeasible politicality and the role of the monk in development activism

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[13] I discuss the OTOP program and its relationship to the contemporary practices of development monks' in later chapters.

[14] I qualify this with "at least" because he had originally told me that he was involved in three networks, but later corrected himself twice, adding groups he had forgotten to list. I mention this as it is indicative of just how active Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is in his collaborative endeavors. In addition to these five active networks, at any given time he is involved in any number of unofficial, temporary, or prospective collaborations, making it difficult to recall off-hand the number of regular groups in which he participates.

[15] I will go into further detail about Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun in the following chapters. For a concise summary of his history and development work (in Thai), also see (Lapthananon, 2012a).

One of the major differences in neolocalist and networked localist ideologies in monastic activism is how practitioners and their collaborators understand the role of the monk in development activism. This is best understood through the lens of development monks' changing conception of and relationship with politicality. This is because, as I argue below, the ways in which monks defeat the ascription of politicality are indicative of how they understand the monk's role and duty in the community, dictating the types of projects in which development monks choose to engage, as well as the types of engagement they pursue. As I describe below, Networked localist monks who engage collaborative state-led project describe political engagement (specifically, what kinds of activities count as political engagement) much differently than do their neolocalist counterparts.

2.3.1   Political activism vs. community development

As many scholars have pointed out (Tambiah, 1976; Suksamran, 1982; Swearer, 2010), the Sangha has had a long history of extensive political engagement, in terms of both legitimizing and contesting government policies and state authority. In present-day Thailand, however, monastic political involvement is prohibited by the Sangha and almost universally condemned as inappropriate by the laity. The first formal prohibition of monastic involvement in politics came in 1974 in response to monks' participation in the political turmoil that culminated in the 1973 student uprising, and it allowed Sangha authorities to punish or expel those monks it judged to be engaging in political activity (Suksamran, 1982) .

Issues of monks becoming politically involved once again came to the forefront of public discourse after monastic participation in the 2011 Red Shirt protests and, more recently, with Phra Buddha Issara playing a prominent role in the antigovernment protests that began in

2013 and led to the 2014 military coup. The latter figure's involvement provoked widespread outcry from the laity, with many demanding his expulsion from the Sangha. I was in northeast Thailand at the time in the midst of my fieldwork, and I often found myself in conversations both with monks and laypeople in which they would harshly criticize Phra Buddha Issara his political activism. Most of this criticism centered on the notion that it is inappropriate for monks to engage in worldly affairs, particularly those of a political nature.[16] I never heard, however, any similar criticism being leveled at the activities of development monks. This is despite the fact that these practices are often focused on politically charged arenas, such as economics and environmental conservation and that the monks involved frequently find themselves either collaborating with or opposing government entities and policies.

The problem, thus, becomes discerning what Jackson (1989) calls "the vague and undefined line which separates acceptable sangha social activities from unacceptable pollutions of the sangha's spiritual status" (p. 154). I argue that in this context, the label "political" is less descriptive – as in a specific set of traits inherent in certain activist practices, than it is prescriptive – as in an evaluation of the suitability of monastic involvement in those practices. Differing referents to which practitioners and sympathizers appeal in order to negate this ascription become a lens through which we can understand changes in monks' perceived roles in localist development activism. In most cases, this took the form of an appeal to the monk's traditional role in society. Those engaged in neolocalist activist practices (that is practices primarily concerned with protecting the local from the non-local encroachment) referred primarily to the *wat* (temple)'s traditional role as village center to deny the political nature of their activities. However, monks engaged in localist endeavors in collaboration with the state

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[16] It is important to note, however, that the northeast is a bastion for the pro-Thaksin "red shirt" movement, against which Suthep and Phra Buddha Issara were protesting. It is, thus, may come as no surprise that people there would be quick to criticize his activities.

and other extralocal entities tended to assert the apolitical nature of their activities by rooting them in the monk's traditional role as arbiters, solving conflicts and bridging relationships among lay actors. This latter understanding opens the door to large-scale collaborative endeavors and helps set the stage for the emergence of the networked localism.

2.3.2   Defeasible Politicality

When asked whether or not monks should engage in political activity, the overwhelming majority of my informants said that they thought that monastic political involvement was inappropriate. The most frequent reason given for this was that it is not in the purview of the monk to be involved in "worldly [*tang lok*] affairs." As Phra Antakan, a monk in Khon Kaen Province phrased it:

> From the perspective of the rules (of the Sangha), it is forbidden for monks to be
>
> involved in politics. Really, it isn't appealing (*suai gnam)*, either – like Phra Buddha
>
> Issara. In the [monastic] code there isn't anything like this. It is this-worldly … [as
>
> a monk] he has a duty to relinquish the worldly… it isn't appropriate (*som kuan)* to
>
> enter into that kind of situation. (personal communication, Feb 9, 2014).

This appears to vindicate, at least in this instance, Weber's (1993) oft criticized (Kloppenborg, 1984; Harris, 2007; King, 2009) description of Buddhism as a strictly other-worldly religion. No such objections, however, were raised at the idea of monks engaging in community development activities. Activism understood as community development was not merely described as being within the realm of acceptable monastic practice, but as part of the monk's duty. What counts as community development, however, varies depending on the observer. In addition, it is defined not only in terms of the practice, itself, but by a number of

contextual factors, including the practitioner/practitioners involved and their perceived intentions. For example, I asked one villager, who expressed his support for monks doing community development work but opposition to political activity, to give an example of what he considered to be community development. He spoke of the Abbot in the local temple, a development monk who had recently arranged for a hospital to be built near the village. I asked him if he would still consider this community development as opposed to politics if it were a politician and not a monk who had built the hospital. He replied:

> I don't think they are the same thing. If a monk builds a hospital, he probably doesn't want anything in return. I think he builds it so that the villagers don't have to be troubled about finding a way into the city. If a politician builds a hospital, I think it is because it benefits him/her… He/she is looking for votes. Monks have the faith of the villagers, but politicians use the money from the people's taxes.[17] For me, these are different (personal communication, February 9, 2014).

This is an example of the fluidity and contextual contingency in the way activist practices are defined and understood conceptually. The singular action of building a hospital can be construed either as political or as an act of apolitical community development. The meaning of the practice, and by extension its monastic suitability, is fundamentally altered depending on the roles of the practitioners involved and their perceived intentions. Furthermore, otherwise "worldly" activities (social and economic development practices) can be legitimated if they are explained in terms of traditional monastic roles in the community. Similarly, whether or not an act is thought to be "political" is highly dependent on what is perceived to be the

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[17] This conceptual distinction is especially interesting when one considers that temple funds are also provided by the villagers.

appropriate role of the monk. Practice that would otherwise be considered political in nature if carried out in a different context or by a different actor is often rendered apolitical if the act is legitimated by an appeal to some aspect of it that locates it within the realm of traditional/acceptable monastic practice. When I asked Phra S (the neolocalist development monk in Loei province discussed above) about the monk's role in society, he replied:

> The word "society" is too broad… [it must be] narrowed down to village society or society of the villagers… What is the duty of a monk? The monk has a duty to teach the villagers, to get them to work together to benefit their society… to help the villagers. They are suffering- suffering spiritually and physically…But monks cannot involve themselves in politics. (Personal Communication, March 1, 2013).

This ostensible shift in meaning of the word "political" happens because in the case of the monk, the term "political" necessarily entails a value judgment: acting with impropriety or overstepping one's boundaries. In the case of Thai development monks, then, the label of "political" is not merely a descriptive term, but one that necessitates an ascription of judgment.

This is a critical point, as it removes "political" from the realm of pure descriptor and reformulates it as a descriptive placeholder for what Feinberg (1968) - borrowing from Hart's (1949) analysis of legal ascriptions of responsibility - refers to as "defeasible" action. According to Feinberg, actions that conform to what Anscombe would call "the form of description of intentional actions" (2000, p. 85)[18] have the potential to be considered "faulty performances," which call for the ascription of blame. However, he makes a critical distinction

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[18] The way of describing events in which "because" or "in order to" can be attached. These can be statements such as "he telephoned," which necessarily imply intention, or those such as "She offended him," which, though phrased in the same manner, may or may not be intentional.

between ascriptions that are "defeasible" and those that are "non-defeasible." Defeasible ascriptions are those in which the imputation of fault can be defeated, even if the fact of the concrete action, itself, is not in question. This is, he writes, because defeasible ascriptions "express a blame *above and beyond* the mere untowardness or defectiveness of the ascribed action" (1968, p. 100). A non-defeasible ascription of blame, however, cannot be defeated without denying the fact of the action itself. This is most easily explained in terms of (but not limited to) situations involving intention. The statement "she shot him" is non-defeasible. Although, excuses can be made and liability can be mitigated, there is no way to defeat the ascription of fault (assuming there is no mistake involving the fact of the action). However, the term "she murdered him" is defeasible, as it implies her intention to kill him. If it can be proven that she did not intend to shoot him or to kill him with the shot, she cannot be said to have "murdered" him. Feinberg writes, "If the 'defeating' excuse is accepted, the fault-imputation *must* be withdrawn" (ibid, p. 98). In describing engagement in political activism as *necessarily* acting outside of monastic purview, the politicality of a practice becomes defeasible. A monk acting in accordance with his duty as a monk cannot be acting politically. Thus, relocating the meaning of a particular practice to within the bounds of what is understood to be monastic duty nullifies the ascription of politicality. That is - if that practice can be justified in such a way that these value judgments are invalidated, it ceases to be "political." Understanding how a particular development monk situates his practices in a way that defeats this ascription is crucial in understanding how he sees monks' roles in community activism – both in terms of the kinds of practices they pursue and the ways in which they can and should engage in these practices.

2.3.3 Appealing to Locality

The two most common referents used to defeat the ascription of politicality that I encountered were (1) locality/scale and (2) mediation/relation to conflict. By locality/scale I am referring to the level of society (village, prefectural, national) at which the monk operates. Those involved in monastic activism (both the monks themselves and their lay collaborators) would often refer to these projects taking place at the local level as proof of their apoliticality, especially if the activism in question involved conflict with the state. I argue that this stems from the traditional role of the *wat* (temple) as the symbolic and spatial locus of nearly all community activities (including those concerned with local politics) with the monk as its representative. Those that mainly referred to the development monk's role as mediator were less concerned with whether or not the monk was working exclusively at the local level than the kind of relationship the monk was facilitating among local and extralocal actors (i.e., one of collaboration rather than conflict). This argument is rooted in monk's traditional role in lay society as arbiter and facilitator among varying groups, both within and outside the village. I illustrate the difference between these two ways of defeating political ascription using Phra S and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun as primary examples.

My informants, both monks and lay actors alike, frequently invoked words such as community (*chumchon*), village (*muban*) and locality (*thongthin*) to distinguish monastic development activity from monastic political activity. The local was one of the primary referents to which they appealed when deeming instances of monastic activism apolitical. One monk in Khon Kaen province phrased it this way:

Monks have a duty in a narrow field. What does narrow mean? It means in the village…they can't have a role on the national scale. But when you have various

groups fighting in the village, he can be the mediator, but in his own community, close to the temple… Monks can do development work because they are closest to the villagers. Closest to the village. But if you are talking about the level of the district or nation, that's a different story…The difference between community development monks and political monks is that the latter have a large focus [they work at the prefectural level, at the national level]…community development is at the level of the village… Monks should not be doing political activity, but community development is OK. (personal communication, February 9, 2014).

This emphasis on the role of locality in the ascription or non-ascription of politicality to monastic activism relies on the *wat* and the monks' historically central roles in all aspects of community life. As many scholars have pointed out, the *wat* has traditionally been a focal point for village activity and village identity (Tambaiah, 1976; Swearer, 1999; Parnwell & Seeger, 2008; Dearborn & Stallmeyer, 2010). As Sivaraksa phrases it, "[In the past] in every Thai village, the temple was the center of spiritual, educational and social life" (2000, p. 181). Until political reforms enacted in the early 20th century centralized the Thai school system and placed them under the purview of the state, the *wat* was also where all young boys went to be educated (Sangnapaboworn, 2007).[19] Pra S described the *wat*'s central role in village life this way: "The *wat* is the body. The village is the shadow. They cannot be separated. Anywhere they go, they must go together" (Personal Communication, January 18, 2013). That the *wat* has often played significant symbolic and material roles in monastic development practice should come as no surprise. The mobilization of its material resources and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) has been a strategy frequently employed by development monks since the movement's inception.[20]

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[19] In many rural villages, this practice continued into the mid 20th century (Seri & Hewison, 1990).

[20] Some particularly interesting examples of monks mobilizing the traditional role and symbolic meaning the *wat* for activist purposes can be found in Darlington (2000a) and Rungwichaton & Udomittipong (2001)'s accounts

The temple, in essence, represents the village and the monk, in turn, represents the temple. As such, mobilizing temple resources in aid of the local community are well within the boundaries of traditional monastic roles and, therefore, cannot be considered political. These resources can include temple space and material goods, as well as the monk, himself, as advisor and teacher.

Phra S roots his activist practices firmly in this realm. He sees himself as acting within his monastic purview as a source of knowledge and resources within the village. As such, he stresses his lack of direct engagement with outside actors and his duty to act as advisor to the villagers. "[As a monk] I cannot do this myself. I can only talk [to the villagers]. If the villagers have a problem, they come to me. I just advise" (personal communication, March 1, 2013). He relates this role as advisor to temple's historical function as an educational center:

[In the past] the villagers came to get educated in schools that were in temples. So the role of the monk was always to advise and to teach the villagers. The villagers came to learn. This is the role that monks can play [in development activity] (personal communication, September 12, 2013).

Phra S also allows the villagers involved in *Krum Khon Rak Ban Koed* to use temple space to hold planning meetings and other protest-related gatherings,[21] as well as providing material support such as lending them audio equipment to hold rallies and stage sit-ins at government buildings. He does not describe these as his personal contributions to the movement, however, but those of the temple.

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of so-called "conservation monks" [*pra nak anurak*].

[21] I observed one instance, for example, in which audio, video and photography equipment was set up in the *sala kan parian,* (the main pavilion in the temple in which sermons are given and ceremonies are preformed) in order that it could serve as the backdrop for a debate about the goldmine's implications for subsequent broadcast on the Thai PBS television network.

I am the abbot of the temple – the person who looks after it, but I am not the owner

of the temple … this temple does not belong to the laymen, this temple does not

belong to anyone. It belongs to the public (Personal Communication 1 March, 2013).

For Phra S, the offering of this kind of support is an extension of the role the *wat* has traditionally played in village society.

Thus, Phra S sees his practices as stemming from the unique and central function that the village temple has traditionally played in the locality. As a monk, he is merely a personification of the temple, which in turn is representative of the village as the manifestation of its "public sphere" (Habermas, 1991) and its educational center. Phra S. places his activism in the context of traditional monastic duties (thus, defeating the ascription of politicality) by referring to the local nature of his activities. He does not directly engage with politicians or outside actors, but instead, conducts his practices within the village borders. He locates his activism in the traditional role of the *wat* as village center and of the monk to be actively involved in counseling the villagers in all community affairs – both secular and religious. For him, actions often considered outside of a monk's purview might not be, depending on the needs of the community.

Each community is different. The role of the monk in each community, thus, also

varies. For example, a community may not have the problem of a goldmine, of

corporations, or environmental problems. The monks [in those cases] would,

therefore, have a different role to play. (personal communication, September 12,

2013).

In keeping with neolocalist ideology, emphasis is placed on acting at the local level and not directly engaging with extralocal or non-local actors (merely advising villagers and providing the tools by which they can protect their autonomy). Activism that is local is in keeping with traditional monastic duties and is, thus, free from political connotations.

2.3.4   Appeal to Mediation

While the emphasis for Phra S and many of the development monks working within a neolocalist framework has been on limiting direct activist engagement to the local level, most of the currently active monks I encountered, such as Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, locate their practice in the traditional monastic role of arbiter and mediator. When asked about politics and monastic development activism, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun said that development monks in the past were often engaging in politics, but that this is – for the most part –no longer the case. He told me,

> In the beginning…development monks were very much "anti" the government system. Not all of the monks - it was maybe 50-50 or 70-30… but I feel like currently, there is harmony among development monks and the government (personal communication, February 13, 2014).

As the quote above suggests, when asked about politics he would often implicitly equate that with conflict. I often found it to be the case my informants would alternate between the words "politics" (*kan muang*) and "conflict" (*khad* yang) as though they were interchangeable and that monks who were involved in one were necessarily entrenched in the other. As one villager

in Khon Kaen answered when asked what he felt was the difference between community development and politics:

> For me, development is what monks should be doing. Improving the lives of the villagers. But going out and getting involved in conflict is something they shouldn't be doing (personal communication, February 9, 2014).

When Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun talks about the difference between development practices and political activism on the part of the monk, he refers to this role as mediator as the primary distinguishing point:

> The people in the community have differing views, but there must be a center…we cannot take sides. The institutions responsible for that will do that themselves, but not monks… Monks who get involved in that kind of conflict [political activism] have possibly forgotten their responsibility to conduct themselves as monks. When you have a conflict, whom can you talk to? The other side? The villagers?...There must be someone in the middle to mediate (personal communication, February 13, 2014).

For Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and others who are part of this newer generation of development monks, it is not restricting one's activism to the local community, but rather advocating for a particular side in a conflict that calls the apoliticality of the monk into question. A development monk can engage with extralocal actors as long as he is acting as mediator or facilitator. This gets to the heart of the networked-localist approach to monastic development activism in which

the monk acts as the bridge connecting local actors and extralocal entities and resources.[22] I argue that it is because the appropriateness of "monk as moderator" is beyond dispute, due to the historical cultural context in which it is embedded. The village *wat* has long been the place villagers have come to resolve local disputes, even those among village leaders and others with explicitly political roles. This is due to the fact that monks have traditionally had the highest level of education and were valued for their wisdom in both religious and secular affairs (Lapthananon, 2012b). It is this role that is carried over into the sphere of development activism that legitimizes and de-politicizes these activities. A monk seen as playing the role of mediator is considered to be acting in accordance with traditional roles and, thus, within his purview.

When distinguishing his development practices from political activism, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun primarily refers to this role as mediator. He explicitly locates his practice in this traditional role of the village monk to arbitrate among all parties involved in a dispute or who have differing interests or positions on an issue or project. He told me:

> Why should monks abstain from political activity? It is because there needs to be a core, someone who won't jump in the water…someone who waits outside and watches to see if someone starts to drown…It is the monk's job to help with that, to help people in trouble. Is that development? Is that politics? They are all mixed together. They are the same thing except that [in the case of development], we do it to figure out how to solve problems, to ease conflict…Could monks do political activity? Sure we could, but then who would be in the middle? (personal communication, January 14, 2014).

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[22] I discuss this in greater detail in the next section.

In development activism, the monk is fulfilling his role as a stable center to which all sides can appeal. This includes situations in which the monk is working directly with government actors and organizations. Regarding collaboration with government entities, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun said that the monk plays an important role in helping policies be implemented smoothly, as he has the villagers' faith and trust.

> If there is a conflict [the government and state institutions] can rely on monks be
> the arbitrator among all sides… They [the monks] are the ones who can show the
> way out (Personal communication, April 28 2014).

The conceptual connection between politics and conflict is clear. Apart from that, he speaks of a shift in the work of development monks from the political sphere to that of the apolitical. This shift from opposition to collaboration in monastic development practice is important, as it coincides with the conceptual de-politicization of such practices. As mentioned in section 2.1, after the movement of the state to ostensibly localist development policies and the withdrawal of anti-government NGOs and activists from monk-led development projects, development monks began to be generally considered less political. They moved from an arena of conflict with the state to one of collaboration, acting as go-betweens among government entities and villagers. Understanding these activities as "mediation" or "facilitation" pushes them out of the political realm and relocates them into that of monastic duty, even in the case secular and often overtly political subjects. Appeal to the traditional role of arbiter allows monks to be involved in political disputes – provided they do not take sides – without incurring criticism for acting politically. Often this carries over into the realm of facilitating collaboration among divergent stakeholders in a given practice, as is the case with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and others engaged in what I term networked localism. The monk that promotes collaboration in solving

problems is not engaging in political activity, even when working with state actors on policy formation and implementation. His role as a monk as arbiter defeats the ascription of politicality and places it firmly within the realm of development.

<center>* * *</center>

The case of development monks in northeast Thailand provides effective lens through which to view the interaction between politics and community development. Here, the ways in which the concept of politicality is contextually ascribed and potentially defeated are critical factors in the success or failure of localist development projects. By shifting the meaning of development from secular activism to traditional monastic duty – acting as mediator and center of the local community – development monks have managed to garner material and ideological support and avoid accusations of political involvement.

Furthermore, the referents to which development monks appeal in order to legitimate their practices are indicative of how they conceptualize the primary role of the monk in localist development practice. For neolocalist practitioners like Phra S, this means contextualizing these practices in the local, referencing the traditional role of the temple as the center of village life and the monk's role as advisor to the villagers in areas both religious and secular. Phra Phothiwirakhun and the majority of the other currently active development monks with whom I spoke, on the other hand, legitimate their practices by locating them in the monk's traditional religious duty as mediator. They work within a networked localist framework – mobilizing extralocal networks to facilitate connections among "enunciatory communities" (cf. Fortun, 2001, P. 11) with divergent interests in order to promote local development. In the next section I will explore the

ideological underpinnings of networked localism in more detail, focusing on how it contrasts with neolocalism and, thus, represents a practical and ideological shift in monastic development activism.

2.4 The pursuit of *place* and engagement with the extralocal

In this section I will discuss the fundamental ideological principles that underlie networked localism. It is especially important to understand how networked localist development monks understand locality and its relationship with the extralocal and the ways in which this understanding both differs from and resembles that of the neolocalists. These fundamental notions shape these practitioners' conceptions of current development-related problems and solutions, as well as lay the ideological groundwork that guides future activist practice. It will, thus, also be necessary to discuss exactly what is meant here by terms such as local, non-local, and extralocal as anthropological concepts in the context of Thai alternative development. I argue that localist development activism is inextricably connected to Augé's notions of *place* and *non-place*, and that the drive toward localization can also be described as an attempt to reassert the value of *place* in a world increasingly beholden to the values of supermodernity.

For the Phra S and other neolocalists, this means asserting the autonomy of those at the local level to live and act with as little interference from non-local sources as possible. Networked localism (represented here by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun) is an ideology that seeks to repurpose assets and institutions typically associated with non-place by embedding them in *place*. Both of these types of localist activism are highly concerned with shaping the way local and extralocal systems and actors relate and interact, as their success is highly dependent on situating the local in an extralocal context and making it legible at an extralocal level. They are also concerned with making extralocal systems accessible to local actors, but this concern is

manifest in disparate ways. Phra S is interested in local legibility and access to extralocal resources only insofar as they empower local villagers to assert their autonomy in the face of the non-local. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, however, is highly active, both in making extralocal technology and expertise available at the local level and in creating collaborative networks through which local needs can be communicated extralocally.

2.4.1   The *Place* of Localism in Community Development

Central to alternative development ideology as practiced by localist development monks are the concepts of locality and community. Locality as an anthropological notion has been defined and interpreted in various ways. Contemporary definitions often follow Appadurai's description of it as being "primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial" (1996, p. 178). According to this view, locality is not necessarily tied to a particular physical space, but "constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts" (ibid). This definition is useful in describing the emergence of virtual communities and the loosening of spatial moorings that has accompanied advances in technologies, which have allowed for travel and communication over increasing distances. However, it does not accurately reflect the term as it is used and understood by either the development monks I encountered in the field or lay actors with whom they were involved. The word that I translate as "locality" (*thong thin*) is an abstraction that is centered upon and defined in relation to *place*. *Place* is defined by Augé as a space that is "relational, historical and concerned with identity" (1995, 77). "Locality" in this context implies small scale, tradition, rurality, and ancestral history and was often described to me in terms of beliefs and practices handed down from an undefined past.

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, development monks often describe their work as *kanphatthana chumchon,* or "community development." Similar to the way locality incorporates and abstracts from the notion of *place*, "community" (*chumchon*) in this context tends to function as an abstraction of locality. The word *chumchon* can be used to express types of social relatedness that are not dependent on spatiality (in the case of an online communities, etc.). However, when used in the context of community development it refers to the lived practices and relations of a group or groups within the context of locality. Both development monks described above, for example, speak of the "communities" (*chumchon*) that are the focus of their development practices as being located in specific places. This is especially true for Phra S, who locates his claim to apoliticality in his activism not extending beyond his village borders. He typically refused to generalize about any kind universally applicable aspects of his work, saying that he only concerns himself with the problems of the villagers. The work of Phra Phothiwirakhun also stems from an aspiration toward development within his own village. However, the border of village is not the limit of his concern and he advocates for the generalization and reapplication of his methods in different areas. This is reflected in his meticulous recording of activities and his use of social media to disseminate and promote them. However, he does not advocate for a one-size-fits-all universal application of his development strategies. He says that this kind of promotion "allows others [with similar development goals] to look at what we have done ... They do not take everything, only the aspects that work for them. They do not do what does not work for them" (personal communication, August 4, 2013). He participates in extra-local networks and campaigns with the intention to share, modify and translate effective development practices so that they may

be transplanted from one local context to others. These ideas are often refined and disseminated extra-locally. However, their application is place-specific and embedded in locality.[23]

Augé contrasts his notion of *place* with that of *non-place*. For Augé, a non-place is "a space that cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (ibid p. 77-78). It is, instead, associated with individualism, immediacy, and anonymity. Among the many examples he gives are supermarkets, hotel chains, and refugee camps. They are spaces that are devoid of all but immediate context and in which all other cultural elements are superseded by the function for which the space was created. Augé argues that we are entering an age of "supermodernity," characterized by excesses in information, space, time, and individualism, in which our lives are increasingly spent in non-places.

Just as Augé posits the proliferation of the non-place in opposition to place, "non-locality" is a useful concept in describing similar trends in policy and practice that are antithetical to locality. The notion of locality held by Phra S and Phra Phothiwirakhun is embedded in place, while non-locality is a state of being and acting that is disembedded from relatedness, history, and identity. Here we see parallels between Augé's lamenting the rise of the non-place and development monks' criticism of top-down (read: non-local) development practices. They hold that state or market-led forms of economic development often fail to take into account the particular social, cultural, moral, and environmental consequences that result from these practices within a given community. The task, then, for the development monk becomes the relocalization of development – re-embedding village life in place.

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[23] However, in practice a certain amount of homogeneity of localist development strategies can often result from this kind of strategy, especially when large centralized entities, such as the state, become involved. I will discuss this further in the latter half of this paper.

2.4.2 The neolocalist pursuit of *place*

Augé's dichotomy between the traditional place and the encroaching non-place provides a frame of reference from which to view the ideology of neolocalism among development monks and other alternative development practitioners in rural Thailand. It is a view that suggests that the only path out of the disembedded economy (cf. Polanyi, 2001) and its accompanying social and environmental problems is to go back to the way it was before. Globalization and neoliberalism are making their way into localities via the implementation of non-local development policies and strategies by non-local sources. Thus, the reaction becomes an attempt to "claw back" (Parnwell, 2005) local control over development by appealing to a remembered way of life and working to stave off the modernist forces attempting to push their way into local communities. When Phra S. discusses the environmental problems in his village he makes a qualitative distinction between those that originate from within the village and those that come from non-local sources.

> There are many ways we can talk about pollution (*singwedlom pen phit*).[24] It comes
> from every place, every direction. *Phit* [25] can come from a single speck of
> dust…Pesticides are also *phit*. The chemicals that come from fertilizer are *phit*.
> Biological fertilizers are also *phit*. These are the *phit* that come from the community,
> from the villagers. However, all of this *phit* is not able to harm humans. But some
> kinds of *phit* does not come from the community, but from somewhere else. They

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[24] *Singwedlom pen phit*, a Thai word for pollution can be literally translated as "the environment is toxic."

[25] *Phit* can mean "toxic" or "impure," and also "dangerous" or "harmful." Although the Thai word is a noun and can be translated into English as an adjective or noun depending on the context. It can, thus, refer to the nominal forms of these concepts as well (toxicity, impurity, etc.). A common practice among the monks with whom I spoke was to demonstrate the relatedness among concepts through the multiple connotations of a word or phrase. For example, when asked about the connection between Buddhism and environmental conservation, several development monks, including Phra S., responded that the word *thammachat* [nature] comes from the word *thamma* [dharma]. Interestingly, this comparison was also used when talking about Buddhist precepts as description of natural laws, rather than moralistic regulations, as *thammachat* (as is the case in English) can be used to refer to "nature," both in sense of the natural environment and natural laws.

are brought into the village so that someone can make a profit … These harmful chemicals, which are actually international [from international sources] create *phit* that is hazardous…They may come from a factory that does something wrong - for example if there is a leak or a seepage or a break, then they flow out. These come in and do harm to the community. These poisons come from the hands of people who come in search of a profit (personal communication, September 12, 2013).

This ideology is reflected in his development practice. While he does attempt to render the local legible on the extralocal stage, he does so only insofar as that legibility assists in resisting the impingement of non-local forces on village life. He does not work to form extralocal networks or collaborate with outside agencies or organizations, aside from the activists who have come to the village in order to assist in the protest of the mine. Instead, he acts as advisor, counseling the villagers as to how to best mobilize their power in a way that is effective extralocally. This predominantly takes the form of advising the villagers on how best to make their demands known to state entities, which he describes as being outside and having little vested interest in the village (i.e., non- local).

We must communicate in a way that they will understand. Communication (*kansusan*) is the most important thing. If we do not communicate they will not understand. If we communicate incorrectly, nothing will go correctly. If we are able to convey [our situation] correctly everything will go correctly, because we are their [the state's] leaders (personal communication, January 18, 2013).

"Communication" here does not simply pertain to verbal or written communication, but also to action as well. According to villagers working closely with Phra S on the anti-goldmine

campaign, he advised them to construct brick walls to block the roads used by TKL vehicles, at which government buildings to stage protests, and as to how to use the law, media, and other extralocal systems to their advantage. He also provides the material support of the temple - allowing villagers to access temple resources for the purposes of contesting the mine. This includes, for example, the use of audio equipment for protests and, on one occasion, opening the temple's *sala kan parian* (main pavilion) for the staging of a televised debate (Figure 2.1). These are all exercises in legibility and accessibility. They are methods by which the plight of the villagers is rendered comprehensible at the extralocal level and by which the villagers can exert their power through the mobilization of both local (e.g., the temple) and extralocal (e.g., the legal system) resources.

Figure 2.1 - The *sala kan parian* being prepared for a televised debate

However, his involvement with the extralocal ends here. Extralocal systems are tools by which the villagers can resist exploitation and outside intrusion. In keeping with the

ideology of neolocalism, he does not attempt to collaborate at this level or to mobilize its resources. When asked about this, he replied, "I don't want to know [think] about others [those outside the village], it's enough to know about these villagers, specifically... [others' business] is not my business" (personal communication, January 18, 2013). He stresses his lack of direct engagement with outside forces and, instead, roots his activism in his duty to act as advisor to the villagers. "[As a monk] I cannot do this myself. I can only talk [to the villagers]. If the villagers have a problem, they come to me. I just advise" (personal communication, March 1, 2013). The development problems facing the village are external and the solution must come from those within challenging those invading forces and asserting the villagers' rights to autonomy. It is worth noting that Phra S and the residents of P Village *are* facing a perceived threat to their health and livelihood, which has - for the most part - been brought about by outside actors and organizations.[26] It is clear, though, that he does not see this as an isolated incident. It is a symptom of supermodernity and the values of the local - those of place - being eclipsed by those of the non-local and non-place. This is not how he articulates his ideological stance, however. In fact, he refuses to speak in terms of the interaction of broad movements and ideologies. His line of sight rarely traverses village borders and he, instead, prefers to focus on (his memory[27] of) lived experience.

In the Past, the villagers were poor. They didn't buy anything except for *nam pla*

[a kind of fish sauce] and salt. They grew their own vegetables. Their houses were

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[26] That is not to say that there has been no local support for the mine. Of the thirteen villages in the sub-district, seven have voted to proceed with the project. G is quick to point out, however, that those villages that voted for the mine are on the opposite side of the mountain upstream from the mine and have, thus, not experienced the same deleterious health consequences as those in the six villages opposing it.

[27] See Delcore (2003) – "The connections among memories and identities, interests, and occasions remind us that cultural meanings are only deployed by real people in lived social contexts. Because memory is lived and practiced, it is open to constant appropriation and reappropriation by people with particular concerns" (p. 76).

bamboo. The roads were dirt... living here was physically exhausting, but blissful (personal communication, February 7, 2013).

He compared this with life as the village developed, in which he said people were more materially wealthy, but unhappy. The cars, paved roads, and store-bought food came with deleterious economic and environmental consequences. The villagers were in debt, they were no longer self-sufficient, and the forests around them were being destroyed as investors increasingly came to buy up the land and exploit its resources.

> In the past, they [the government] evicted people from the forests and forbade them
> from living there. They thought this villagers were destroying the forests, so they
> kicked them out. But the forests were still being destroyed. In fact, they were being
> destroyed to a greater extent than before. This is because the *nai thun* [capitalists][28]
> have machinery and can chop down many trees per day. The villagers only had axes
> and saws…They had to know then where the damage was coming from. It came
> from the *nai thun*…[Similarly], we have had gold, steel and minerals…since
> ancient times. But in this era, people's greed has increased. People's desire has
> increased. So they do more, dig more, use more resources, take more resources, and
> there is more damage done to nature. This damages the community. It makes the
> community change (personal communication, September 12, 2013).

This is emblematic of the neolocalist development ideology. Development-related problems in local communities is the result of encroachment from non-local and modernizing

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[28] Although *nai thun* directly translates as capitalist, it does not necessarily mean one who adheres to the ideology of capitalism (as opposed to communist). I have also often heard it used to refer to anyone embarking on a project with the primary goal of making money (e.g., investors and entrepreneurs).

forces, who have little or no stake in quality of life at the village level. These entities are driven by the (typically neoliberal) values of non-place and supermodernity, which conflict with those of community, history, and identity associated with *place* inherent in traditional village life. The only way to reestablish the role of *place* in the village is to drive out these entities and reestablish local autonomy. The networked-localist ideology, however, sees a different dynamic among local and extralocal systems, symbols, and actors and, consequently, looks for other ways to reassert the importance of *place* in village life.

2.4.3 The networked-localist pursuit of *place*

The movement away from neolocalism by development monks like Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is best understood through Varnelis and Friedberg's (2008) criticism of Augé. Augé saw spaces replete with cultural, historical and communal context being steadily supplanted by those characterized by transience, convenience and alienation. While accepting Augé's premise having to do with the nature of the place and the non-place, Varnelis and Friedberg do not share his pessimism. They assert that Augé failed to see (or foresee) the critical role communication technologies play in re-connecting communities and re-embedding individuals in place. They hold, instead, that these sorts of technological advancements have led to the formation of networked communities, which span large distances and are not necessarily contingent on physical proximity. In the *Place: The Networking of Public Space*, they trace the history of communications technologies and the failed predictions of loss community that have accompanied new developments in this arena. They focus on the pervasiveness of the internet - especially with regard to its growing role in mobile technology - and its ability to dis-embed community from physical space. This disentanglement, they hold, allows one to bring the essential elements of *place* – relatedness, history, and identity – with them wherever they go. Patrons of a Starbucks are not necessarily taking part in the non-place

that is a chain coffee shop, but interacting in a community unbounded from place via their laptops and mobile phones. "For those who gather in these hot spots," they write "to engage with the network, being online in the presence of others is the new place to be, the bodily presence of the other cafégoers easing the disconnect with the local that the network creates" (p. 20).

For Varnelis and Friedberg, Augé's eulogy for place was premature. In a way that is reminiscent of the Hegelian dialectic (cf. Mueller, 1958), the apparent deterioration of place's role in people's lives was merely the beginning of its transformation into something that transcends proximity and spatial boundaries. They conclude, "Today, Augé's solitary non-places are an artifact of the past. We will never be alone again, except by choice" (p. 39). Throughout the course of the contemporary era, developments in communication and information technology have led to non-places being supplanted by networked place, thus offering a potential escape from the postmodernists' prognoses of increased isolation and cultural homogeneity. The *networked place*, then, is not fully connected to locality per se, as it is not necessarily tied to a point in physical space. In this respect it is much like non-locality. It exists more-or-less ubiquitously and independent of physical proximity. However, it is also a conduit through with people reassert and reinforce their communal identities and relationships. These networks are neither local nor non-local. They are *extralocal* in that, while they are not tied to a specific place, they do not necessarily serve to undermine — and can, in fact, work to promote — the role of locality in development activism.

It is helpful to view Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's practices through this frameworks. This is especially true of his mobilization and promotion of information technology. As with Varnelis and Friedberg's description of networked places, implicit in these endeavors is the

belief that utilization of such technologies can mitigate the alienating effects of modernization in the context of community development. When I asked him about his reasons for promoting ICT education in the village, Phra Phothiwirakhun spoke of its potential to both enable those who have left the village maintain their connection to the community and to give the local community a presence on the extra-local stage. In the past, if a member of the village migrated to the city for work or education, it would necessitate that they sacrifice knowledge of and participation in events there to a large degree. In many cases, it would require them to spend the majority of their time in one of Augé's non-places. To insist that there be an attempt to reverse the trend of urban migration would be — at the very least — impractical. Bangkok and other urban metropolises are rich with educational and financial opportunities that cannot typically be found in rural small-scale communities. For Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, however, this does not mean, as Augé suggests, the rapid and inevitable disappearance of "place"-ness. Nor does it mean, as the neolocalists insist, that in order to reassert the relevance of locality it is necessary to go back to "the way things were." He emphasizes, for example, the role that communication technology plays in maintaining community ties over long distances. "Sometimes the children here have parents who are in Bangkok or another country. This [internet communication, social networking, uploading pictures online, etc.] allows [the parents] to see their children and grandchildren" (personal communication August 4, 2013). He asserts that maintaining connections between the local community and those who have moved away is a critical in preventing the loss of those community ties and that it does so in a way that was not possible in the past. Like Varnelis and Friedberg, he sees networks facilitated by communications technologies as particularly adept in mitigating this effect, and a possible means by which globalization and localization can coincide.

With regard to the recording and active promotion of his activities via social networks such as YouTube and Facebook, he says that it allows groups in other places with similar problems and similar goals to see what his community has done and is doing about them. It creates a forum in which communities cease to act in isolation, but as a sort of community of communities, in which values and methods are shared but applied selectively from within, thus ostensibly avoiding the pitfall of assuming methodological universality. In this way the networked localism practiced by Phra Phothiwirakhun, not only embodies, but expands upon the notion of networked place. Varnelis and Friedberg describe the communities accessed and created through extralocal networks are communities of individuals and are, thus, not rooted in physical proximity. These networks work to assert individual identity strengthen the ties among the individuals who form the network regardless of their physical location (or history of shared physical location). Varnelis and Friedberg can then confidently assert that networked places are formed and sustained independent from locality as I describe it here. The networked localism represented by Phra Phothiwirakhun, however, aims at developing networked places in which communities form the network and in which ties can be strengthened and resources mobilized within each community.

Furthermore, in addition to adopting the tools associated with non-place and supermodernity, he attempts to incorporate the symbols found there, as well. This is evidenced by his *wat*-as-community-center, which he describes as follows:

In the temple there are various learning centers, for example a community shop, a financial institution, an ICT center, a children's center. It becomes a center like a

gas station.[29] In a gas station we can use the bathrooms, we can shop at Seven Eleven, we can go to Amazon [a nation-wide chain of coffee shops] or go to a restaurant, and fill our tires. It is a central hub. [Do this and] people will stop by the temple without thinking about it" (personal communication, March 10, 2013).

As a spot made for those in transit with speed and personal convenience emphasized above all else, the Thai gas station/rest area is the quintessential non-place. Instead of simply opposing the rise of the one-stop shopping center, Phra Phothiwirakhun has adapted its model of centrality and convenience. In doing so, he has re-appropriated the symbols of supermodernity in an effort to reestablish the role of locality – of shared history and community identity – in the lives of the villagers. It is the reclamation of public space – not of a specific plot of land or institution, but of the kind of space in which people engage in public activity. This is a decidedly different approach from that of the neolocalists, and it is one that is made legible if we re-articulate the relationship among *place, non-place,* and the extralocal. For him networked place exists, not as a replacement for Augé's *place*, but as a conduit through which development can be localized and through which locality (firmly embedded in place) can be reaffirmed and remain relevant.

* * *

Thus, we see the contrast between this notion of non-locality and that of locality from within the context of Buddhist development. Locality is a state of being, acting and relating which is embedded in place. Non-locality in this context represents a state of depersonalization

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[29] In Thailand, gas stations are often similar to large rest areas or mini malls. They are set on a sprawling plots of asphalt dotted with trees and fountains, and they often include restaurants, convenience stores, shopping areas and coffee shops.

of development, in which development methods and economic policies are universalized and implemented from the top down with little regard for the specific cultural, historical, and material circumstances of a particular village. Development monks' opposition to non-local development practices mirrors Augé's lamenting of the advance of supermodernity and the rise of the non-place. The spaces Augé would describe as non-place – airports, mini-malls, coffee shop chains – are manifestations of non-locality. For these monks, non-places represent a rise in consumerism, loss of community and religiosity, and dwindling populations in rural villages as members of the younger generation increasingly move to urban centers. Thus, be it Phra Phothiwirakhun's temple community center or Phra S's work to oppose a corporation's construction of a gold mine near his village, the practices of development monks often reflect an opposition to non-locality and aim to relocalize development. They are an attempt to re-embed modern life in a sense of *place*. However, the development practices of Phra S. are rooted in the ideological framework of neolocalism and, thus, reflect a wholesale rejection of globalization. Phra Phothiwirakhun, meanwhile, has appropriated the symbols and functions of supermodernity and chosen to repurpose them in order to further the goals of localism. This networked-localist understanding of the relationship between the local and non-local sees the adoption of the symbols and technological underpinnings of supermodernity and by the mobilization of extralocal collaborative networks as imperative to the localist endeavor.

Conclusion

Since the early 1960s, development monks have been a major voice in the localist development movement in Thailand. When the phrase "development monk" first entered the Thai lexicon, it was primarily used to refer to monks who engaged in social activism aimed at combatting state-led development policies. Most of these projects were based on the ideology of neolocalism, which attempts to reassert the authority, autonomy, and identity of the local by

opposing the encroachment of the non-local and supermodern into village life. As I contend above, it is this kind of ideology that was prominent among alternative development activists in the 1980s and 90s and that academics tend to equate with localism in Thailand in general. However, the practices of the localist activist whom I encountered during my fieldwork - both development monks and lay activists - reflected a different reality. The development monks with whom I interacted who could be considered neolocalist were primarily those who had been most active in previous decades, with the one exception to this being Phra S. However, his current practices stemmed from a specific event, and one that attracted attention and support from a previous generation of lay-activists, which arguably helped to shape is understanding of locality and its relationship with the extralocal. In the past support for development monks' projects often came from these kinds of neolocalist NGOs and activists, many of whom were anti-government. However, with the creation of the "People's Constitution" and the passage of the National Decentralization Act in the late 1990s, the Thai government began adopting the language and symbols of localism in its own development strategies, which has ultimately worked to crowd out localist NGOs critical of government policy from monastic development practice.

The new form of localism that has emerged is that of *networked localism*, which differs greatly from the neolocalist ideology, both in how it understands the role of the monk in activist practice and how it conceives the relationship between the local and extralocal in the process of localization. Neither Phra S nor Phra Phothiwirakhun see their activism as being political, despite the fact that they both find themselves involved with political actors and entrenched political interests. Phra S works to oppose the government agencies, politicians, and international corporations that he sees as acting in ways that are destructive to people's lives at the local level. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, on the other hand, actively collaborates politicians

and government agencies to develop and implement community development strategies. He serves to legitimize state development interests and is a conduit through which development policies can be executed at the local level. Both of these monks refute the ascription of politicality by referring to what they conceive of as the primary role of the monk in activist practice. For Phra S, this is the monk's duty to represent and to act on behalf of the temple, which in turn is the center of village life and is responsible for helping to solve the problems of the villagers. Conversely, for Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, it is the monks duty to act as mediator and facilitator among actors with differing interests and at various levels of society that form the backbone of his development work. This difference in emphasis regarding monastic roles closely relates to that in how they understand the relationship between the local and extralocal in development work.

Both neolocalist and networked-localist development monks attempt to reassert identity and heterogeneity in an increasingly globalized economic, social, and legal systems. They are attempting to re-embed these systems in *place* and to re-establish the role of *place* in peoples' lives. However, those working in the neolocalist tradition are seeking to "undo" the encroachment of non-place and "claw back" local power by returning to what they perceive as having been the predominant way of life in the past. Networked localism, on the other hand, works to repurpose the tools associated with global networks and non-place and use them revitalize locality and assert its relevance on the global stage. This ideological distinction is crucial, as it shapes both localist development practices and the ways in which practitioners interact with national and global systems and actors. It is at the heart of how development goals and strategies are generated and of how these projects and policies are implemented.

Phra S, in keeping with the neolocalist tradition, acts as advisor to the villagers, teaching them to formulate their demands and to assert their power within an extralocal context. Conversely, Phra Phothiwirakhun works to utilize extralocal networks and global communication technology to create *networked places*, consisting not of individuals, but of communities. He sees his role as being that of facilitator or "translator," working directly with extralocal entities and re-contextualizing the symbols and provisions that have traditionally characterized delocalization and the non-place of supermodernity. The historical background and introduction to the ideology networked localism as it contrasts with that of neolocalism detailed in this chapter lays the groundwork for an in-depth description development monks' contemporary networked-localist practice in northeast Thailand. In order to give a better understanding of how networked localism plays out *in situ*, the chapters that follow are devoted to an in-depth ethnographic account of Phra Phothiwirakhun's development and networking practices and to understanding how this new form of localism has fundamentally altered the practical and ideological terrain of monastic development activism in Thailand.

3 A Village Hub – Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's Temple Community Center

In this chapter, I will use the example of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple-as-community-center, the Community Learning Center in Honor of Wat Phothikaram, as a way to understand how networked localist ideology is manifest in village-level development practices. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has spent the past two decades working to equip his temple with various facilities aimed both at giving villagers access to services and resources and at ensuring the continued centrality of the temple in village life. These include an ICT/Digital and vocational-training center, an OTOP production center, a financial institution, a co-op convenience store, a radio station, a cultural center, and a children's learning center, among others. As I described in the previous chapter, a chief focus of localist development activism in Thailand has been granting local communities access to extralocal resources. In the case of Phra S (the neolocalist development monk discussed in Chapter 2), this takes the form of allowing villagers access to political and legal recourse when faced with encroachment on their safety and autonomy from outside sources. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and other networked localists, however, are mainly concerned with accessibility in the form of allowing access to extra-local resources by making the knowledge, technologies, conveniences typically associated with supermodernity available at the level of the local community. However, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's community center is not merely about granting access. I argue that it is also attempting to reimagine institutions typically associated with what Augé would call supermodernity and *non-place* (1997) and reorient them so that they function as entities of the community - to re-embed them in *place*. He accomplishes this by implementing his projects in such a way that the temple acts as a "network hub," occupying a place of *betweenness centrality* in local-extralocal interaction.

3.1 Ban Pho Noi – Pho Sisawat and *Wat* Phothikaram

In this section I outline the basic background and context of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's village-based development work. I begin with a short description of the two villages – Ban Pho Noi and Ban Sisawat – that are the main focus of the temple's activities. I also give a brief account of my time spent conducting fieldwork in the villages with an emphasis on my day-to-day routine while in the field. I conclude with an outline of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's foray into community development and the impetus behind his temple-as-community-center.

3.1.1 Ban Pho Noi / Ban Pho Sisawat
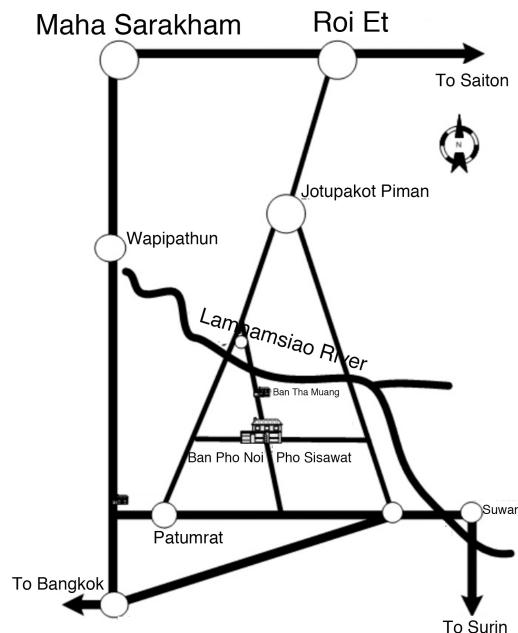
Figure 3.1 Map showing the location of Ban Pho Noi/Ban Sisawat[1]

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[1] Taken from Ban Pho Noi's village development report and edited for the purpose of transliteration. The original is available at http://roiet.cdd.go.th/WEBTDR_VDR/VDR/4503/VDR17.pdf.

Wat Phothikaram is located in Patumrat district in Roi Et province about 55 km from the provincial capital. The province, itself, its mostly rural with the largest city (Roi Et) with a population of only 118,789[2] residents. *Wat* Phothikaram was first built in 1915 and has had a total six abbots, including Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun.[3] The temple lies on the border between two villages, Ban Pho Noi and Bhan Pho Sisawat, located in Phonsung subdistrict. In the past these had been a single village originally called Ban Tha Muang, which was located nearby the villages' current location along the south bank of the Lamnamsiao River. After a series of fires, the residents (about 13-14 households at the time) moved the short distance and reestablished the village on the area Ban Pho Noi and Ban Pho Sisawat have occupied into the present day. Although they are technically separate villages, there is no obvious border between them (it is only marked by a small sign) and they share a single temple. The villages are numbers six and seven[4], respectively, in Patumrat district and are located eight kilometers from the district center. The villages consist of 2449 rai (about 4000 km/sq) with 93 rai allocated to residences and 2314 rai being used for farmland. According to the 2011 census (the most recent data available), there are 160 households (all with electricity and telephone service) with 454 permanent residents (209 men and 245 women). The villagers in the two villages are chiefly rice farmers, as are those in the surrounding cluster of villages[5]. The average wage of those working in the village is approximately 56,500[6] baht household/year.

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[2] Retrieved from http://www.roiet.go.th/

[3] see Appendix A for a list of monks currently residing at *Wat* Phothikaram.

[4] Villages in Thailand are assigned numbers in their districts.

[5] In the initial stages of my fieldwork, I would often begin conversations by asking what people did. This usually prompted a hesitation, an incredulous look, and then the answer of "farmer," as if disbelieving that I could have possibly imagined otherwise.

[6] Approximately 1,600 USD

Of the 454 villagers, 151 were over 50 (in 2011). During my fieldwork, I rarely encountered anyone older than high-school age and younger than 50. I suspect that this is partially due to the fact that I primarily stayed in *Wat* Phothikaram during my visits to the villages and work in the rice fields precluded those younger villagers who remained from regularly visiting the temple. However, outmigration was also extremely common. Many younger family members in the households had moved to Bangkok to work or to the neighboring Maha Sarakham Province to study at the nearest national university. Initial conversations with villagers typically began with inquiries about where I was from and why I had come to Ban Pho Noi and quickly turned to sons or daughters my age, who had moved to other provinces.

Villagers in the area, including the monks at local temples, speak the *Isan* dialect, common throughout the northeast (although those who were able would speak central Thai with me due to my limited proficiency in the dialect).

3.1.2   My Time in Ban Pho Noi / Ban Pho Sisawat

I made regular visits to the villages of various durations (anywhere from two days to two weeks at a time) between 2013 and 2016. I would stay on temple grounds in the four-room building that is used to accommodate visitors to the temple, located adjacent to the monks' dwellings. My days began with attendance of the morning offering at the *sala* (the pagoda used for merit-making), at which villagers would gather for prayer and to present the monks residing in the temple with their morning meal. It was here that I would converse with many of the elderly women of the village (the men and younger residents were usually working or otherwise engaged). Following this, each day's activities varied widely (as did Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's schedule) and I rarely had any foreknowledge as to what they would entail.

If there was a temple event being held, I would assist in the preparation, photography, and various other menial tasks to be carried out during the proceedings. Often times, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun had business to be conducted outside of the temple. If this was not a private matter, I would often accompany him. Otherwise, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun would frequently have made arrangements for me to spend the day with a temple volunteer, either engaged in work at *wat* Phothikaram or visiting a monk at a nearby temple whose work pertained to my research. Sometimes he would ask me to give English lessons to the village children, either at the temple learning center or the local elementary/high school. If no such arrangements had been made, I would spend the day talking to volunteers at the various temple facilities, composing and organizing field notes, or walking around Ban Pho Noi and Ban Pho Sisawat conversing with the villagers. It is important to note that, although I spent time traversing the villages and have conducted extensive interviews with villagers outside the context of the temple, the majority of my time was spent on temple grounds with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and the other monks and lay volunteers there. This was a conscious choice. For this particular research, I am less interested in the concrete results of and reception to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's development activism than I am in the strategic and ideological underpinnings by which it is informed – specifically those that characterize a networked localist approach. Thus, I elected to focus primarily on understanding the perspectives and cultural contexts of the activists involved in these projects.

Much of my time with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was spent traveling to temples in provinces throughout the *Isan* area, acting as his assistant [7] (carrying his *yam,* [8] taking photographs, and carrying out various other small tasks as instructed) as he attended meetings, conferences, ceremonies, and other events with development monks and lay activists. My participation in these events was often the result of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's active promotion of his activities. Any time there was to be an activity which he thought may be of interest to my research, he would send me an invitation through various social networking platforms. These activities are discussed in further detail in chapter 4.

3.1.3   The Community Learning Center in Honor of Wat Phothikaram

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was born in 1969 in Ban Pho Sisawat as the sixth of eight children. When he was in his fourth year of elementary school, he became a *dek wat* (temple boy) at *Wat* Phothikaram, in order to attend to his grandfather, who had recently been ordained there. He credits this experience with setting his life on a religious path and with helping him begin to see the ways Buddhist teachings could be applied to benefit society. He was ordained as a novice after finishing elementary school and attended high school in the nearby province of Maha Sarakham. After graduating from high school, he moved to Bangkok, where he successfully completed his *naktham ek* (dhamma scholar advanced level) ecclesiastical examination at *Wat* Daowaduengsaram, after which he was fully ordained at nearby *Wat* Amornkiri. He continued his education at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya [9] Buddhist

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[7] Many of the people with whom we interacted would jokingly refer to me as his *luk sit*. The word, "*luk sit*" is often translated as disciple, but more accurately refers to a temple boy who assists with the monks' with their various chores in order to gain merit or to receive religious instruction (see Rajadhon, 1986). Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun would often take the joke one step further, correcting them that I was actually his *luk sit intoe. Intoe* (pronounced similarly to "inter") is the word used to denote international and foreign exchange students. I was, thus, his "foreign exchange disciple." This never failed to elicit a laugh from those within earshot.

[8] The saffron satchel Thai monks use to carry their personal effects.
[9] *Maha Chulalongkon Ratcha Witthayalai* using the Royal Thai General System of Transcription

University, where he received a bachelor's degree in Buddhist Studies. It was in Bangkok that Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun began to dabble in activities, such as creating a community newsletter to connect migrant villagers in Bangkok to events back home – that would begin to shape the trajectory of his community development work.

After receiving his degree, he returned to Roi Et province in order to focus more heavily on these efforts. He describes one particular encounter with a Patumrat district chief as being a major catalyst in this decision:

10 years ago, this village was dishonest. There was a district chief, whose name I have not spoken in a long time. One evening there was a teacher at his house after work and they were sitting and talking. The chief said - forgive me for the language but I want to impart what he said - … "out of all 100 villages in Patumrat district, there are many villages that can be developed. There is one village, though, that is just shit." … He did not know that there was someone sitting there with him from that village. There was one village that refused to develop. This village had nothing but problems. This became my motivation. I am part of this village. I must go back and see that it develops (Phothiwirakhun, 2008, Translation mine).

In 1995, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun established the *Sun Ganrian Chumchon Chaloem Phragiad Wat Phothikaram* (The Community Learning Center in Honor of Wat Phothikaram; see Appendix A for map), a program aimed at improving economic conditions in the village by teaching villagers marketable skills such as sewing and typing. Nearly ten years earlier, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun had studied typing in the nearby province of Maha Sarakham (where he practiced meditation during Vassa or Buddhist Lent) in order to develop his own skills. Upon

his return to the temple in his home village, he realized that typing would also be a useful vocational skill for the villagers there to learn. He managed to get a copy of the curriculum, but was unable to acquire a license to teach it in his temple. Undiscouraged, he created a program himself, consisting of eight lessons, after which the students who finished the course would act as volunteer teachers for the next group of trainees. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun often refers to this as a "villagers teaching villagers" approach, and it has been a pervasive theme throughout all of his subsequent development work.

In the beginning he had no dedicated classroom in his temple, so was instead using the temple's *sala phak sop* (a pavilion used for storing bodies awaiting cremation) as a learning space, as it was the least used of the temple's facilities. He borrowed temple money to buy three computers, on which the sixty-or-so villagers participating in the program had to take turns, and which were in use from five a.m. to midnight every day. This evolved, with support from local officials and the ministry of technology, into the temple's ICT center. Over the years Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has slowly added various facilities connected with the learning center and its goals of helping villagers to attain knowledge and vocational skills and promoting what he refers to as "local wisdom" (*panya thongthin*). In addition to the ICT center, these include a children's pre-school learning center, a village library, a radio station that broadcasts news stories translated into the *Isan* dialect, and a small "museum" for displaying tools and equipment traditionally used in the area to aid in farming and household chores (see Appendix B for a map of the facilities). All of these projects – even those that are comparatively direct attempts at affording economic opportunities to the villagers such as the financial institution, the co-op convenience store, and the OTOP production centers – are rooted in pedagogy. They are implemented with the goal of teaching the villagers about sustainability and development based on Buddhist principles. After the 1997 financial crisis, King Bhumipol proposed the

adoption of a "sufficiency economy" (*sethakhit pho phiang*) economic development philosophy, which advocated limiting consumption and attempting to curb what he saw as unsustainable economic growth. Although this notion gained little traction with the Thaksin administration, it found a resurgence after the 2006 coup d'état, where it formed the basis of a number of campaigns aimed at local village.[10] Coinciding with this, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun began using the temple's community learning center as a way to teach the villagers about sufficiency economy and the ideals of community responsibility, self-reliance, and the re-rooting of local economy in traditional practices that it professes. The most recent addition to the *Wat* Phothikaram community center is a combination café and meeting space for villagers and outside visitors to the temple. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun mobilizes these institutions and facilities in order to bring the villagers together (as well as extralocal actors), using social, institutional, and technological networks to transform the village into a place in which there are resources and opportunities and that is also firmly rooted in local tradition, relations, and identity - what he refers to as a "smart village."[11]

Although there is a shared general ideological framework underlying these various projects and facilities, they are not part of an overall plan with a specific end goal. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun argues that this allows for greater flexibility and the ability to adapt the project to the villagers' changing needs, as well as to resource availability and technological innovation.

At the temple we work with no plan. We do not plan ahead of time what we are

going to do, but work in the present (*pachubhan*). What we do in the present is more

beneficial than what we do according to a plan. You may ask, isn't it good to work

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[10] More on sufficiency economy and its ramifications in chapter 5.
[11] Using the English and, thus, relating it to the "smart" technology.

according to a plan. Sure it is. But is it sustainable? Perhaps in some ways but it

will not reach the actual target group.[12]

This lack of a long-term overarching plan for the *Wat* Phothikaram's community learning center

allows for constant strategic realignment of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's development activity.

This, in turn, helps to preserve the relevance of the temple in village life and to ensure that it

plays a central role in managing local/extralocal knowledge and resources, as I argue in the

next section.

3.2   The Temple as Network Hub

A fundamental strategy by which networked localists approach the concept of "access"

within development practice (especially with regard to communication and resource networks)

is through the creation and/or strategic relocation of centralized access points. It is helpful to

think of these access points in terms of "nodes" and "hubs." A node is typically understood as

a point where links in a network intersect. In the case of the internet, for example, this could

refer to the individual modems connected to the network. In the case of social media, this might

mean the individual users with accounts on various platforms. Nodes are widely dispersed

throughout a network and, when taken individually, have little impact on the structure or

integrity of the network as a whole. However, as Zizi Papacharissi (2011) points out in *A

Networked Self,* "these numerous small nodes coexist with a few very highly connected nodes,

or hubs" (p. 4), which she compares to the large airports in a few major cities that serve as

connection points for all of the various smaller airports around the world. The question then

becomes how one differentiates between a "node" and a "hub." Here I will distinguish the two

using the notion of *betweenness centrality.* According to Freeman (1977), points can occupy

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[12] Excerpted from the transcript given to me by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun of a speech he delivered in 2008

positions of what he refers to as *centrality*. Points exhibit *centrality* when they "stand *between* others and can therefore facilitate, impede or bias the transmission of a message" (p. 36). Nodes that facilitate connection between two or more points in a network can, thus, be said to have *centrality*. However, as Freeman goes on to point out, the degree of a given point's *centrality*, does not necessarily reveal any information as to its role in the integrity of the network as a whole (i.e., whether or not it acts as a hub). He, thus, proposes describing points in terms of "betweenness-based centrality." Hansen, et al. (2010) refer to this as "betweenness centrality" (as I will here) and define it as "a measure of how often a given vertex lies on the shortest path between two other vertices" and "of how much removing a [point] would disrupt the connections between other [points] in the network" (p. 40). I will, thus, define a "hub" as a node that exhibits (high) *betweenness centrality*[13] – it lies at a central point on enough important network connections that removing it would significantly disrupt the network as a whole.

This is a useful lens through which to view Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's approach to his practice. Networked-localist practice is often an attempt to establish and resituate the "nodes" that make up local-extralocal networks in a way that facilitates greater participation of local actors in those networks and uses them to strengthen the authority, autonomy, and identity of the local community. In some cases (as in that of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun), the successful deployment of multiple nodes in a variety of social spheres may lead to the monastic development practices functioning as a network hub. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple-as-

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[13] For the sake of simplicity, I will not refer to *betweenness centrality* by degree (i.e., "high" vs. "low" betweenness centrality). This is because I am using the term not to accurately measure the import of a particular node to the network as a whole, but as a device to understand the *intended* role of specific monastic development practices. That is, I am interested in how practices are implemented in order to attain/maintain high betweenness centrality, but not in actually evaluating the degree of success to which these goals are achieved (assuming such an endeavor would even be possible based on ethnographic data). Thus, I will be treating *betweenness centrality* as a binary concept – insofar as whether or not a given practice is intended to function as a hub.

community-center is not merely an attempt at helping to connect the local to the extralocal, but to be an active and intrinsic part of the connection process, itself – to be a hub. This, he accomplishes through working to facilitate both *access* to and *mobilization* of extralocal resources. The individual facilities in the temple can be understood as nodes that lie at the intersection of local-extralocal linkages. The financial center is a node linking villagers in Ban Pho Noi and Ban Pho Sisawat to the Bank for Agriculture and Agriculture Cooperatives and the services it provides (and to extralocal financial networks, in general). The OTOP centers are nodes that connect villagers producing local goods with national and international markets in which there is a demand for products that carry with them a story and the label, "authentic." None of these nodes taken in isolation, however, create an *essential* connection between the villages and wider extralocal networks. Taken together, however they are fundamentally an attempt to alter the ways in which the local interacts with extralocal systems in terms of 1) granting local actors access to extralocal expertise, technology, and material resources, 2) rendering the needs and conditions of local communities legible at the extralocal level, or 3) re-embedding extralocal systems and the institutions of supermodernity in *place* and locality in ways that extend across multiple social spheres. Thus, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple-as-community-center is clearly an attempt to act as a "hub" connecting the village to the extralocal.

By contrast, the majority of the temples I visited that were headed by development monks engaged in networked-localist activity were focused primarily on a single type of access/legibility-related project,[14] many of which overlapped with those being implemented at

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[14] I do not consider campaigns aimed at changing village behavior projects such as anti-smoking or anti-drinking campaigns to be primarily about access or legibility. They are, however, a large part of networked-localist practice, as I will discuss in following chapters.

Wat Phothikaram.[15] Phrakhru Phothitham Khosit, a development monk in Udon Thani province for example, works exclusively arranging for village projects to be sold through OTOP. Phra Athikan Wichian, another development monk in Roi Et province, has focused all of his attention with regard to local access and legibility on his ICT and media technology center. In cases such as these, the temples act as nodes, connecting villagers to extralocal networks and the resources available therein, but are too narrow to be considered attempts to fundamentally change the way village life as a whole relates to the extralocal. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, however, has constructed a complex consisting of a multitude of these kinds of nodes. Although each of the facilities in *Wat* Phothikaram can be said to fulfill a specific purpose that creates its own connection between the village and extralocal systems and entities, these nodes are linked through their connection to various social spheres and their spatial and symbolic affiliation with the *wat* (temple). As such, the *wat*, itself, becomes a kind of hub as represented by a spatial location. It acts as the access point to a cluster of interlinked nodes, which in turn, serves as a stage for local/extralocal interaction and a major conduit through which ideas of community, locality, and modernity are mutually construed. It is important to note, however, that the network by which a hub is defined is, in part, an imaginary construct. By this I mean that it is artificially bounded – a process necessary in order to render it viable as an object of discourse. This means that a point's betweenness centrality (and, thus, whether or not it is to be considered a "hub") is contextual. Here, I will refer to temple practices as "hubs" based on two kinds of context: (1) the position they occupy in linking the local to the extralocal in a given social sphere (e.g., economy) and (2) the position these practices occupy in linking the local to the extralocal across multiple spheres in ways that significantly impact local-extralocal connection

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[15] This is mainly due to the collaborative networks in which these monks participate, through which strategies for the implementation of local development projects are shared and activities are coordinated. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

as a whole. I argue that – taken as a whole – Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple-as-community-center is an attempt to make the *wat* into a hub based on the latter context.

This distinction between the *wat* as a node and *wat* as a hub is an important one, as it means that, in the case of the latter, these are not merely ancillary services provided by the temple in an effort to solve the individual access/legibility issues of the local community. When taken in concert, they form an attempt to reimagine the ways in which access to these systems and the relationship between *place* and that the institutions and tools of supermodernity are to be understood and engaged. Apart from facilitating direct *access* to extralocal resources through the creation and relocation of network nodes, networked-localist development monks also work to *mobilize* existing nodes to which villagers already have sufficient access. That is, they attempt to shape the ways in which these nodes are accessed and used in order to grant local actors greater autonomy, authority, and legibility at the extralocal level, as well as preserve the relevance of the temple and local community in people's daily lives. Although these nodes and hubs are points or clusters of points within a network that facilitate connections among other points, they are not merely passive conduits. In other words, they are not intended to behave simply as *intermediaries,* which Latour defines as "what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining [their] inputs is enough to define [their] outputs" (2005, p. 39). Instead they act as *mediators*, which "transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry" (ibid). This is key in that the networked-localist endeavor is one that attempts both to facilitate local/extralocal interaction (granting access to expertise, resources, conveniences, and familiar symbols associated with supermodernity) and to fundamentally alter the process and symbolic meaning of that interaction (by re-embedding it in *place*). Latour bids those of us in the social sciences to reexamine facets of social life that are typically treated as *intermediaries* and explicitly focus on how they may behave as

mediators. It is through this process that we can attempt to transparentize the proverbial "black box" and better understand the active role that its components play in the production of meaning. This is precisely what the networked localists have set out to do. Theirs is an attempt to create specific kinds of *mediators* – nodes and hubs that convey resources, etc. while also fundamentally transforming their symbolic meaning – and to render as visible that process of transformation. This conscious attempt to create these kinds of *explicit* mediators is a hallmark of networked-localist practice.

Although Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple facilities are often described in terms of their intermediary functions (giving villagers access to internet technology, savings accounts, etc.), they are not mediators disguised as intermediaries. Instead, he describes the whole of his activities in the temple as a "model" (*Tonbaep*) to which villagers and others attempting similar endeavors can refer. This is a driving force behind the active promotion of his practice through social media, presentations to other monks and lay activists, demonstrations for temple visitors, and large festivals and events held at the temple. It is also evident in the pedagogical aspects inherent to all of his temple practices. As I show in the descriptions of his various endeavors below, in addition to providing certain kinds of access, each of the facilities at the temple are underscored by an educational component. They are implemented with the intention of teaching the villagers how to incorporate the tools and symbols of the extralocal into a community values-oriented framework. The nodes at the temple are, thus, not merely implicit mediators, but are set up in such a way as to demonstrate the process by which this mediation can take place.

This creates an important contrast to those development activists who have primarily only been concerned with allowing access. Many traditional development monks (those whom

I would not consider to be networked localists) with whom I spoke had discontinued their activist practices when they felt that villagers had gained more-or-less sufficient access to financial and educational resources. A statement I frequently heard was some variation of "the villagers are already developed." They often cited the success of previous development projects or changes in government policies regarding local development as reasons for this shift. This view is predicated on access being the primary goal of localist/Buddhist development practices. This poses a significant contrast to the ideologies and practices of many of the networked localist monks practicing today, particularly those of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is attempting to facilitate access to these resources, but he is not *just* trying to facilitate access. The temple-as-community-center is an attempt to facilitate local access to extralocal knowledge and resources in a specific way – that is, through the temple. Maintaining the relevance of the *wat* and of local community, as a whole, in the lives of the villagers is, in many ways, more important than simply insuring access. As he explained to me at our first meeting,

If we do not do something like this [utilize and provide access to these types of resources], young people will see religion as something for a different [older] generation, not theirs. But if we do something to entice young people to come into the temple on their own, they will come out of self-interest. However, once they are here, others will also benefit" (personal communication, January 18, 2013).

It is important to him that these resources are provided as part of the *wat's* role in the local community. When the temple serves as a hub – a place that exhibits "betweenness centrality" – linking local and extralocal actors, institutions, and resources, these connections become inextricably bound to religion and the central place it has traditionally occupied in the village.

Consequently, as villagers have gained access to certain extralocal resources (such as readily available internet access) by means other than through the *wat,* Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has strategically repositioned his activities, pursuing new ways to maintain the temple's centralized role in the community.

In the sections below I describe the various facilities that make up the Community Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram, focusing on how Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun attempts to facilitate access to extralocal resources and to mobilize these resources in ways that promote his localist goals. I loosely categorize the temple facilities according to three spheres that are central to it acting as a hub and occupying a space of betweenness centrality in the village. The first is technology. Access to/mobilization of Technology is a cornerstone of networked localist approaches to community development. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and other practitioners involved in similar development endeavors are concerned with allowing villagers access to the technological resources, in that they are often able to facilitate the availability of other material/social/educational resources and to give local actors a voice on the national/international stage. The second sphere is economic. The primary concerns regarding this sphere are (1) allowing villagers access to greater financial/material resources and (2) promoting the kinds of economic behavior that they see as leading to sustainability and greater local autonomy over economic resources. Finally, his work in the sphere of education is focused both on providing the villagers with general/vocational education/training opportunities and with preserving and disseminating local culture (as well as the culture of localism). Although I divide these facilities/nodes into distinct spheres for the purpose of clarity, it is important to understand their roles holistically, with nodes spanning multiple spheres and aspects of each reinforcing those of others.

3.3 The Temple as an Technological Hub - The Community ICT Learning Center and Community Digital Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's *Sun Kanrianru ICT Chumchon Chaloem Phragiad Wat Phothikaram* or The Community ICT Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram (hereafter referred to simply as the "ICT center") is the project for which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is best known and is arguably his most successful endeavor. The center began as a series of typing courses (described above) aimed at providing villagers with basic vocational skills. As access to knowledge and economic resources became both more readily available and increasingly dependent on access to the internet and competence in its use, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun made ICT access and competency the centerpiece of his temple-based development activism. This began with the creation of an ICT center located on the grounds of *Wat* Phothikaram. This attracted the attention of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, with whom he collaborated in opening similar centers in a number of temples throughout the region (financed by the ministry).

Of the various facilities at the temple, the ICT center is most emblematic of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's endeavor as a whole and, as such, offers the greatest insight into his attitudes regarding localist development activism and local/extralocal connectivity. While the center began primarily as a means to grant local villagers access to extralocal knowledge and resources, its role has since shifted to ensuring that the temple (and, by extension, religion and locality) remains relevant in an era characterized by digital connectivity. As smart phones and other devices became more ubiquitous, villagers began to have increased personal access to online networks. The temple ICT center has concurrently worked to bolster its online presence, primarily by becoming extremely active in social-media-based promotion and the formation of online village networks. As I argue in this section, this shift in Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's ICT-

related projects (as well as those of many of the so-called "cyber monks" whom he has inspired)
highlights a key aspect that sets the networked localist approach to development apart from
other types of community development strategies. It is not merely an attempt to grant villagers
opportunity or access to resources that they otherwise would not have, but also an effort aimed
at defining how villagers interact with those resources – namely, in a way that is contingent
with the localist emphasis on *place.* The move from the ICT center as an access point to that
as primarily an appropriation and attempted reconfiguration of the use of existing IC
technology to which there is already access, and finally to the its most recent incarnation, the
Wat Phothikaram Community Digital Center is a clear demonstration of this. It is also an
example of the importance placed on the temple's role as a "hub," mediating the network paths
by which villagers interact with this technology.

3.3.1   The Community ICT Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram

Figure 3.2 - The logo for The Community ICT Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram

The original ICT center[16] in *Wat* Phothikaram consists of a single room containing 20 desks facing front in typical classroom formation, each furnished with a windows desktop computer. At the front of the room is a row of desks with a raised shelf in the center. Atop the desks sit desktop computers connected to a television screen that faces out over the pupils, as well as a sign-in sheet for registration.

Figure 3.3 - A computer training session *Wat* Phothikaram

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun offers training courses for all ages and a wide variety skill and experience levels. The basic classes are usually taught either by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun himself, or by another monk at the temple. The pupils in these lessons often consist of village children, novice monks, elderly community members, or older monks who had heretofore eschewed the use of modern information technology. For the more advanced classes, especially those involving programming or web-design, he calls in local volunteers, often from the nearby

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[16] As of this writing, the ICT center still exists in the form described here. However, since the recent introduction of the Community Digital Center described below, the structure of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's ICT-related endeavors have been changing rapidly and it is possible that it has since been remodeled or repurposed.

university. These classes are typically attended by local entrepreneurs, police, and government officials.

Some of the most basic classes I attended revealed how little many of the villagers knew about the technology. On one occasion, for example, I was（without warning）[17] ushered into the room and led to stand in front of 16 elderly women perched at the computer terminals. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun handed me the microphone and asked me to introduce myself, which I proceeded to do. He then asked me to explain to the waiting pupils "about computers." The vagueness of the request caused me to hesitate (did he want me to explain how to create a social networking account? Or, perhaps, how to write an email?). Seeing my hesitation, he quickly prompted me with questions such as "Can you use computers to talk to people? Can they talk to their children in other provinces?" "Can you use it to check the weather?" "Can you read the news?" It struck me that I had fundamentally misunderstood what was being taught. This was not so much a class explaining how to use computers as it was explaining the basic ways in which computers can be used. However, despite there being a group of villagers (in particular elderly farmers) who do not possess basic computer skills, computer access and literacy among villagers as a whole has been growing rapidly.

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[17] During my visits to *Wat* Phothikaram and to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's various activities outside of the temple, it was often the case that he would call me into a room, where I would find myself in front of a group of people (monks, villagers, officials, etc.), and instruct me to give a spontaneous presentation. These were usually about monastic development and my experiences with and opinions about development monks and their practices. However, they were also quite often impromptu lessons, as in the computer example here, or as in English classes for which I had had no prior notice in order to prepare (being led to the front of a classroom full of waiting pupils and given the instructions "teach them some English for the next hour or two"). I mention this because it serves to illustrate the active, varied, and often fast-paced/spontaneous nature of some of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's collaborative endeavors. In addition to his methodically-planned large-scale endeavors, he would routinely engage in unplanned or improvised activities when opportunities arose or someone with a useful set of skills happened to be present.

At the time of its inception and for a number of years thereafter, the temple's ICT center served a dual purpose. One of its functions was to act as a training facility as described above. Its other role was as a place at which the villagers, especially children, who did not have computers in their homes (or their pockets) could access and become familiar with them. This was important, as it helped to establish the temple as a kind of access point. For many of the villagers, logging into social media, searching for information on the internet, or simply playing computer games required them to go to the temple to do so. Access to these extralocal resources was inextricably linked to the physical space of the *wat*, further underscoring its salience in village daily life. It is also an example of one of the defining characteristics of the networked-localist approach to development activism – the appropriation of extralocal technologies in a way that couches them in practices and institutions particularly relevant to local history, tradition, and communal relations.

This emphasis on localization through access provision is still apparent in some respects, but has become less relevant in recent years. As mentioned above, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun still offers computer access and training to elderly villagers who may not have internet communication devices in their homes or the knowledge of how to use them. He also occasionally arranges for specialists to teach higher-level technical courses (programming for websites using HTML, etc.) there. For many of the residents of Ban Pho Noi and Ban Pho Sisawat, however, the temple ICT center no longer plays the role of networked classroom and internet access terminal.

Much has changed in the years since Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun began this project and the ubiquity and relatively low cost of smart phones[18] in recent years has meant that many of the

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[18] Prices for low-end smart phones throughout Thailand now often rival those of devices without advanced

villagers are carrying around ICT devices with them wherever they go. Furthermore, in 2011, the Yingluck administration announced a One Tablet Per Child (*Khronggan Taeblet Phisi Phuea Gansuksa Thai,* OTPC) with the goal of supplying tablets running the Android operating system to students in primary schools across the country.[19] Although this program was later scrapped by the National Council for Peace and Order after the 2014 coup, it succeeded for a short time in granting village children regular access to IC technology in the home. During the early days of my fieldwork, I would often see children - even in remote villages with no internet access - huddled in a corner playing games on these devices. Many of the villagers in Ban Pho Noi and Ban Pho Sisawat have similarly become familiar with using IC devices and are frequent users of social media platforms for communication, without the need for an access center in the temple.

A key characteristics of the networked localist approach, however, is the willingness of the activist(s) involved (in this case, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun), not merely to adapt to changing conditions and new paradigms, but to attempt re-contextualize the products of change as vehicles for *place*-ness. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun tends to accept (if not outright embrace) novelty - particularly with regard to advances in and expanded access to technology. Thus, as villagers gained increased access to and became increasingly active in mobile computing and online communities, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun began to focus his efforts there. He has since endeavored to cultivate the temple's online presence, becoming especially active on social media networks such as Facebook and Line. He now posts several times daily from the ICT center's Facebook page. These posts are often inspirational words or hand-drawn cartoons

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computing capability and cellular networks cover the vast majority of the rural countryside. Over the course of my fieldwork, I never encountered a village in which there was not at least one area with cellular service. In addition, if someone has a mobile phone they are not currently using, it is common practice to gift it to friends or family members who are either without a smart phone entirely or using an older generation.

[19] See http://www.inspect3.moe.go.th/strategy3/upload/ebooks/56/22_56.pdf (in Thai)

offering benedictions or exhorting Buddhist philosophies with regard to life, community, and development. More often than not, however, they are simply accounts of the days' meetings, ceremonies, or activities accompanied by photo albums, often containing hundreds of individual images, which he typically uploads within hours of the event. He has uploaded thousands of such albums, making this Facebook page both an up-to-the-minute newsfeed and a vast photographic archive of past activities.[20] At any meeting, temple event, training session, or other activity there are, thus, likely to be several younger monks and lay assistants with cameras in hand taking a seemingly endless stream of photographs and videos.[21]

Figure 3.4 - The ICT center's Facebook page

It is important to note that, although it is a vehicle for the dissemination of a wide range of temple-related information that is unrelated to computer or other IC technology, this Facebook page is represented as that of the ICT center, more so than of the temple as a whole.

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[20] Many photos of my own visits to the temple can be found here, including those of my first interview and tour of the temple, which were taken by a novice monk at the behest of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and uploaded later that day.

[21] I was often among this group. While staying at *Wat* Phothikaram, many of my mornings began with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun calling me to his office and handing me a camera and evenings frequently ended with us exchanging the image data that I and his other assistants had collected.

This serves to both relocate the ICT center to a virtual space while simultaneously grounding its virtual presence in the actual space of the physical center. While the physical incarnation of the temple ICT center is now often empty (with the exception of occasions where special training courses are being held), its virtual incarnation is populated by thousands of people, both in the local area and elsewhere. It has both helped the center remain relevant despite the dwindling number of visitors and insured that villagers' engagement with computing technology and virtual networks remain connected to the sense of community, history, and locality - of *place* - that the temple represents. Similarly, it insures that *Wat* Phothikaram's ICT center remains a part of the ongoing dialogue regarding how IC technology is understood and utilized, particularly within the context of promoting the goals and values of the local community. Phra Phothiwirakhun also sees the uploaded content, itself, as being a way in which the ICT center's online presence remains situated in the physical and cultural space of the local community. As he states:

Do we lose the system we have here in our community just because there is [technological] development like this? Does it mean we lose our traditions, our local culture? Look at Facebook [and the images uploaded there] and such. Where are those photographs taken? They are taken here. [They are not taken in] America or Europe. The thing that is presented in all of these is the local community (personal communication, December 3, 2013).

By comparison, Phra Athikan Wichian, the abbot of *Wat* Sakate (also in Roi Et province) has taken a different approach in many respects to that of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun in attempting to preserve the relevance of the temple ICT center. *Wat* Sakate, located in nearby Gasetawisai district is one of the many temples across the region that followed Phrakhru

Phothiwirakhun's example and opened an ICT center within its grounds. Rather than focus on its online presence as information technology became increasingly accessible to the villagers, he instead made it a multimedia training facility for local youth. When I visited the temple, it was full of posters and photographs portraying past events and advertising for current and future campaigns. I was told that these are mostly created by young people in the village as training projects. I was introduced to one of the trainees, a villager in her late teens, who explained to me the various projects in which the temple was engaged using video footage that she was in the process of editing together. Afterwards, when I was to begin a formal interview with Phra Athikan Wichian, he first had his lay assistant (a former monk) and two of the young trainees arrange two chairs against a photogenic backdrop. They then proceeded to set up a video camera and sound and lighting equipment. He explained that he would like to use this interview as an opportunity for the students to improve their video-production skills. They were to be involved at all stages of the process: setting the stage, operating the equipment, digitally editing the footage, and uploading the finished product to social media networks.

Figure 3.5 - A trainee and volunteer preparing to record my interview with Phra Athikan Wichian

Phra Athikan Wichian's approach to his temple's ICT center differs from that of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun in that it is more focused on physically bringing people into the temple and engaging them in other temple activities in the process. He does not simply teach the villagers about multimedia production, but has them practice *in situ* producing content to assist in the promotion and execution of his projects. They also differ in terms of scope. Phra Athikan Wichian is primarily concerned with using technology in order to maintain the relevance of the temple in the villagers' daily lives, and not with fundamentally altering the ways in which villagers understand and engage with communication technology, itself. By contrast Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, while also deeply concerned with the relevance of the temple in the lives of villagers, is looking to transform the way they interact with modern information technology

and technological systems – to occupy a position of *betweenness centrality*. It is because of this, I characterize Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's (and not Phra Athikan Wichian's) endeavor as an attempt to make the temple a technological hub. However, the two monks' approaches are similar in that they have both embraced shifts in strategy as the resources offered through the temples became available to the villagers by other means.

3.3.2 Café Potikaram, the Community Digital Center, and the future of the ICT center

For Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and *Wat* Phothikaram, this kind of adaptive repositioning of the temple's ICT center has become even more explicit with the temple's most recent addition, "Café Potikaram."[22] Café Potikaram officially became the newest incarnation of the ICT learning center in late July of 2016, although it had been open as a meeting and visitors' center for nearly three months prior. As part of a collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT), it became the first of nearly 2,000 village high-speed internet access points around the country for which there are plans as part of the ministry's recent DiCY (pronounced "dee-see") Digital Literacy Thailand project aimed at educating villagers about digital technology.[23]

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[22] The transliteration here differs from that used elsewhere. This is because the name of the facility as displayed on the building romanized as such. Elsewhere, I use the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS), in which this would be written as *Phothikaram*. Thus, although I spell the two differently here, there is no difference in the way the names of the café and the temple are written or pronounced in Thai.

[23] For more information on this project, see http://dlthailand.org/

Figure 3.6 - Café Potikaram

Café Potikaram is a single building, the interior of which consists of two main rooms and a short, narrow hallway that leads to two Western-style washrooms. One of the rooms is a small indoor dining area, and the other is a kitchen with a sink and several cupboards filled with mugs, trays, and utensils. Opposite the sink area is a narrow sliding-glass window similar to those often found in diners and drive-through coffee stands. Below both the interior and exterior sides of the window are long counters used for making and serving drinks, respectively. Although there is no espresso machine or other coffee-brewing equipment, the inner counter is lined with various types of tea and single-serving instant coffee popular in the villages and nearly always served at meetings and other gatherings. As for the exterior, it is striking how much it is furnished to resemble the typical Western-style cafés in cities and along highways throughout Thailand. Unlike most of the other buildings in the temple, which are mostly white

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and green-painted concrete with corrugated metal roofs, the café's exterior walls consist of wood siding painted beige with coffee-brown trim. There is a large covered front porch lined with railings and fixed benches on three sides and containing 8 lacquered two-person tables, which can be variously combined and positioned as circumstances dictate. Above the wooden counter and a sliding service window there is a flat-screen television connected to a karaoke machine and sound system with speakers mounted on the walls. The front of the building is adorned with stylized wood lettering spelling out "@*Phothikaram* 101" ('101' is pronounced *roi et,* a pun on the name of the prefecture)[24] in Thai and "Café Potikaram" in English. When he first showed me the café, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was also eager to point out the lighting, which was made from colorful casts of wine glasses containing bulbs and hanging upside-down from strings in order to resemble chandeliers.

As I argue throughout this chapter (in particular, with regard to this building, the financial institution, and the co-op convenience store), these kinds of aesthetic characteristics are of critical importance, as they provide direct symbolic links to the institutions typically associated with non-place and supermodernity. It demonstrates that Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is not merely   creating a space for people to gather and drink coffee, but is instead appropriating the *concept* of the coffee shop and much of the meaning that is attached to it for the purpose of strengthening the role of the temple and the local community in peoples' lives. This connection to commercial cafés is one that is not lost on the villagers. I was confused the first time a woman in the village suggested we meet at "Amazon" and talk. Café Amazon (note the similarity to "Café Potikaram" in terms of naming convention) is a Thai franchise coffee chain with over 1,000 locations throughout Southeast Asia.[25] "Amazon," as it turns out, was also the

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[24] In a similar fashion, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun often referred to the ICT center in writing as "0 ICT" (*sun ICT* = ICT Center).

[25] According to their own website: http://www.cafe-amazon.com/

common name by which the people in the village were referring to the temple café. However, although it comes equipped with all of the aesthetic trappings of a typical coffee shop, the one thing it does not do is sell coffee. Tea, coffee, and high-speed internet are freely available to anyone who wishes to use the facility. It is meant to be a work, meeting, and recreation center for people in village and visitors to the temple. It is not a café so much as it is something that *represents* a café.

The facility's appearance is also critical to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's strategy for maintaining the relevance of the temple in the villagers technological lives. As of July 2016, it became the first *Sun Dijithan*[26] *Chumchon* (Community Digital Center) for the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT)'s most recent village internet access initiative. As part of this initiative, the ministry provided the temple with high-speed internet access, as well as a free three-day session to train volunteers in the village, who will, in theory, be tasked with training others in their community (discussed in more detail in the next chapter). For Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, this digital center is another way in which he is adapting the temple's ICT center to the changing ways in which the villagers interact with internet technology. As I described above, most of the villagers now have access to mobile internet technology in their homes. While the original center and its desktop computers still exists and is officially part of the Community Digital Center, it now functions primarily as a classroom for occasional training sessions. This new center has become Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's central technological project, the goal of which is to provide a high-speed internet connection

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[26] Many of the people involved in the project with whom I spoke, including Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, pointed out the new "English" pronunciation of the word "digital." Until a recent change instituted by the MITC, the official Thai transliteration and pronunciation of the word "digital" had been "*dijiton*." The change was intended to make the word more closely resemble the English pronunciation, and I was left with the impression that those involved saw this as representative of technological modernization.

and a comfortable environment in which the villagers can use their devices. When I asked him about his reasons behind the creation of the new digital center Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun said,

In the past people would come to The Community ICT Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram in order to use the computers in the center. This is because most of them did not have smartphones or tablets or anything like that. Now, however, not many people come to use the center, as they all have mobile phones, smartphones, etc. So we had to adjust, increasing the internet signal and making it a Community Digital Center. We also made it so they can watch movies, listen to music, and watch TV through applications or satellite (personal communication, July 30, 2016).

In order to maintain the temple's role as technological hub, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has adapted his methods to accommodate the changing ways in which villagers interact with technology. Although the vast majority of both monks and laypeople with whom I spoke praised this strategy, it was not without its critics. One Roi Et monk (who often collaborates with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun on his anti-vice campaigns described in Chapters 4 and 5) felt that the introduction of the café and elements like it into the temple could weaken its practical and symbolic role people's lives. He put it this way,

[Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun] sees [the café and digital center] as "integration" (*buranakan*). He uses that word. But if you keep bringing these kinds of things into the temple, at some point it ceases to be a temple. At that point, what is the difference between a temple and a mall? It is like pouring sugar into coffee. If you keep pouring sugar into your coffee, at some point it is not coffee anymore, just

sugar. Look at Pattaya [referring to the popular tourist destination]. They call it Thailand. They call temples there temples, but are they really? There aren't any Thai people there. Only foreign tourists. You can call something a mango, but if it has no actual mango in it, then it is just a name. You can call it a temple, but is it really a temple if people come to drink coffee and play games on their phones rather than to meditate? (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

He went on to express that the temple does not need to adapt in this way in order to remain relevant, saying that people will grow tired of the depersonalized and de-spiritualized nature of the modern age (read: *non-place*) and find their way back to the temple in order to get away from that. He, thus, makes a clear distinction between religious and profane, *place* and *non-place*. These two realms are in contrast with one another and elements associated with each belong to that realm alone. This contrasts drastically with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's philosophy and helps to illustrate the specific way in which he understands the incorporation of elements such as a café into his temple-as-community-center. For him, the café and digital center represents, not an incursion of non-place into a sacred space in the community, but a repurposing of the tools and symbols of non-place in order to strengthen community and religious consciousness.

Furthermore, he understands it as an adaptation and extension of the development work in which he has already been engaged for nearly two decades. While in the past the temple provided access to the basic information technology that the villagers were lacking, that function has become less relevant as access has become exponentially more ubiquitous and affordable. This digital center is the most recent example of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's willingness to adapt his strategies in an attempt to ensure the ways in which villagers interact

with technology remain embedded in *place.* In this case, that means creating a space that entices the villagers to gather at a physical center in the community in order to use digital technology. Specifically, he is attempting to draw them into the temple, a space which – as I discussed in the previous chapter – is often considered a symbol of the village community as *place.* He also describes this in terms of providing access to an important service the villagers are lacking, and one which will narrow the gap between the urban middle class and the rural poor. Both Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and Dr. Uttama Savanayana, the now former Minister of Information and Communication Technology, emphasized the role that high-speed internet access in the village could play in allowing the villagers greater vocational opportunities from within the local community. The Community Digital Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram, thus, is a fusion of the two strategies described in the previous section. It is both an attempt to provide access to technologies that are otherwise not available to the villagers and to shape the ways in which villagers interact with the technology to which they already have access, and doing so in ways that seek to reinforce the temple's *betweenness centrality* in the technological realm and root villagers' interactions with information technology in *place.*

* * *

When Phra Phothiwirakhun first embarked on his endeavor to create an ICT center in his temple, it was primarily about *access.* It was an attempt to grant villagers access to extralocal knowledge and modern technology that was otherwise unavailable to them (at least at the village level), and doing so in a way that emphasized the relevance of community and locality, a typical feature of the networked-localist approach to community development. By locating the point of access in the temple – traditionally understood as the symbolic representation of the local community – Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was both reinforcing the centrality of the *wat* in village life and symbolically positioning these resources to be accessible from within the

context of history, relatedness and identity – of *place*. It places emphasis on history in that it reinforces the *wat*'s traditional role as the repository of local means. It attempts to cultivate social relatedness in that it is meant to be a gathering point for members of the community and to combat the dispersion of the village population that results from villagers attempting to find these kinds of resources elsewhere. Finally, the *wat* has often served as shorthand for village life in rural Thailand. It has traditionally been the community center, synonymous with local identity.

Once villagers had greater access to the technology and its use, these connections of IC technology to *place* could not be maintained merely through the provision of access. However, if the temple was going to continue to function as a hub shaping and facilitating connections between the local and extralocal, it was critical that it continue to have an active presence in this arena. It, thus, became important that Phra Phothiwirakhun retain the relevance of the temple ICT center within that new paradigm. The temple's role in information technology began as that of a computer access terminal and training facility. When villagers no longer required access to the basic technology, it shifted away from being an access point to become an online vehicle for the promotion and dissemination of temple activities and information, in an attempt shape the ways in which villagers interact with the technology to which they to which they already had access. The ICT center's most recent incarnation as the Community Digital Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram aims both to provide access to networks and technology previously unavailable in the local community and to mobilize its existing technological resources in a new way. This kind of adaptation is a strategic repositioning, aimed at ensuring that the *wat* continues to occupy a position of "betweenness centrality" in a changing milieu.

3.4 The Temple as an Economic Hub - Local Economy, Sufficiency Economy

A critical component of the temple's betweenness centrality is the essential role it plays in the economic lives of the villagers. The financial institution, OTOP production center, and *Sao Sen* convenience store are attempts to occupy and mediate three critical areas of economic activity: financial management, production, and consumption, respectively. Taken together, they form a hub that moderates the ways in which the local economy interacts with extralocal networks, institutions, and symbols.

There are two critical interrelated points that make this an essentially networked-localist endeavor: (1) each of these facilities are attempts to make resources and conveniences typically associated with the extralocal and supermodernity available at the local level and (2) they work to reframe them as instances and agents of *place* while making the role of local community both indispensable and clearly visible in their implementation. The latter is accomplished through rooting these institutions in the ideals espoused by in the localist philosophy of Sufficiency Economy. According to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy has been the driving force that informs nearly every aspect of these endeavors. As I briefly mentioned in Section 3.1.3, the idea of Sufficiency Economy began to gain in localist development practice when, in response to the 1997 financial crisis, King Bhumipol called for the adoption of economic policy that emphasized moderation and sustainability over rapid growth and overconsumption.[27] The main tenants of Sufficiency Economy are "moderation," "reason" (acting lawfully and ethically), and "immunity" (saving money/resources in order to be able with weather periods of economic hardship) (NESDB,

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[27] Full English transcript available at http://kanchanapisek.or.th/speeches/1997/1204.en.html

2007).[28] The state's large-scale efforts to promote this Sufficiency Economy have led to its becoming a common referent among localist activists, especially development monks. The financial institution, OTOP production center, and convenience store described below all emerged out of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's attempt to implement the values espoused by this philosophy. Together, they are an attempt to both teach villagers about Sufficiency Economy and to provide a mechanism through which they can put it into practice in their daily lives. In doing so, he hopes to encourage self-sufficiency in the village and enable a local economy that incorporates what he sees as traditional Buddhist values.

3.4.1 Pho Noi/Sisawat Community Financial Institution

Figure 3.7 - the Exterior of the Pho Noi/Sisawat Community Financial Institution

The most direct connection to Sufficiency Economy in *Wat* Phothikaram is the *Sathaban Kangnoen Chumchon Pho Noi Pho Sisawat* or Pho Noi/Sisawat Community

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[28] In chapter five, I delve into more detail about this philosophy, as well as some of its more troubling implications regarding the way it portrays villagers and problematizes their participation in activities that are valorized at the extralocal level.

Financial Institution (hereafter referred to simply as the "financial institution"). The financial

institution was established in 2006 in order to promote economic security by both encouraging

villagers to save money and acting as insurance in the event of a medical/financial emergency.

It is supported by the *Thanakhan Phua Kankadset Le Sahakon Kankaset* (Bank for Agriculture

and Agriculture Cooperatives, BAAC).[29] The BAAC is a government owned and operated bank,

which was established in 1966 as an organization to help give rural farmers access to loans.

Legally, inherited farmland cannot be foreclosed upon and, thus, cannot be used as collateral

for a bank loan. As farmland is often rural farmers' only possession with significant monetary

value it is often impossible for them to borrow money from a commercial bank. Thus, rather

than relying on collateral, the BAAC employs a system of joint liability, in which individual

failure to repay negatively affects the credit of their entire cooperative group (Fitchett, 1999).

The BAAC has since branched out to focus on deposits and savings programs, particularly after

the 1997 economic crisis. The financial institution in the temple is an organization that allows

villagers to access the services provided by the BAAC without having to go into the central

district. About 70% of the villagers from Ban Pho Noi – Pho Sisawat currently have accounts

with the institution, which is open three days per week. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun primarily

works as a consultant, giving the volunteers in charge advice how they can operate in ways that

are more convenient for the villagers who use the service.

Although the exterior of the building looks much like the other buildings in the temple,

the interior poses a striking contrast. It consists of a single air-conditioned room with waxed

floors and white walls. In the center of the room is a teller counter, with the high-front design

one is accustomed to seeing at banks and credit unions. Signs are affixed along the front of the

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[29] http://www.baac.or.th/treebank2/index.html

counter, reading "credit," "deposit," "open an account," etc., each corresponding to computer terminals on the opposite side at which volunteers are stationed. Like the children's center and the co-op, there was always staff on hand during the hours of operation. On subsequent visits, the number of volunteers working at any given time ranged from four to six. This was the only building in the temple to contain a chart detailing the staff hierarchy (Figure 3.8).[30] At the top next to the director of the institution are listed Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and the BAAC, both of which are labeled as consultants. These kinds of charts are most commonly found in government buildings, although they often appear in the offices of large businesses or those seen as doing "official" work. The overall effect was to endow the space with an air of bureaucratic formality, an atmosphere that was at odds with the open and casual character of the other buildings in the temple. However, the walls were adorned with slogans, such as "Our enemy is 'poverty,'" and "We are close. We are friends in need. A community of one" (in Thai), which broke with the otherwise clinical design and suggested at least an ostensive grounding in community awareness and centeredness in a particular locale.

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[30] In official buildings throughout the country, it is common practice to display a poster detailing the role of each staff member accompanied by a photograph of the employee in question. These pictures are hierarchically arranged in the shape of a pyramid, with the photographs and fonts becoming progressively larger at each successive level toward the apex, which represents the head of the department/organization in question.

Figure 3.7 - Committee hierarchy chart displayed in the financial institution

Although many of its aesthetic characteristics contrast with those of other temple facilities, this institution is representative of the localist aims exhibited by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's other endeavors. It is an attempt both to grant access to extralocal resources and to mobilize them to promote localist ideals. When I spoke with the volunteers working at the center, they emphasized the role of financial institution in allowing the villagers greater access to banking resources. They spoke about localizing features of extralocal institutions – making them more readily available at the local level. This was often expressed in terms sheer proximity. Before the establishment of the financial institution the villagers had to drive out to the district capital to visit a bank. As one of the volunteers working at the bank told me, "Many of the villagers are elderly and have trouble making it into town. This gives them a place to deposit money much closer to home" (personal communication, 4 September, 2015). The villagers with whom I spoke who made use of the financial institution also emphasized the importance of its being located in the village. In addition to the facility's close physical proximity, having a financial institution in the village that is managed by villagers means its

services are available seven days a week. Although the building itself is only open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, anyone who needs to use its services on other days can simply visit the bank volunteers at their houses and get them to open for them. Most importantly, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun stresses that it gives people in the community access to funds that may not have been available to them otherwise. He told me:

> They may not have money to send their children to school. They can come and borrow money. And sometimes they [borrow money] in order to make their living. They can use it to buy goods for resale, and so forth … and there are other people in the village that can come and guarantee that [the borrower] is spending the money properly" (personal communication, May 14, 2016).

Because the facility is located in the village, where everyone knows everyone else, it is much easier for members to take out loans based primarily on their reputations in the community.

The financial institution also grants greater access to savings utilities. Potential members can open new accounts by depositing as little as 100 baht (about three USD), allowing villagers with limited financial resources to begin saving money. This aspect involves prescriptive component, as well. It is part of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's attempt to make following the basic tenants of the Sufficiency Economy philosophy (such as saving money and refraining from overconsumption) more convenient. Rather than merely offering services associated with banks and similar financial institutions, it also purports to be highly active in promoting saving and financial responsibility among the villagers, both through the financial services it offers and through basic training programs. Many of the villagers who use the service cite this as one of the major influences that this institution has had on the community.

N, a 48-year-old woman born in Ban Pho Sisawat, for example, remarked on the ways in which the presence of the financial institution has encouraged villagers to save:

> In a bank you have to have a lot of money to open a savings account… Here if I have 200 or 100 or 50 baht, I can go in and deposit it. It makes it easy to keep depositing money and helps us [the villagers] understand the value of saving. The development monk [Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun] is the one who tells us how to save and then if we have an emergency or one day find ourselves in a financial predicament, we will have money there (personal communication, October 28, 2015).

When asked about effects of the temple financial center on the village, those involved in the program placed emphasis on its beneficial role in developing a community consciousness with regard to saving and its positive influence on community morality. The volunteers at the institution explained that a great success of the organization has been in encouraging village children to understand the value of saving money. They said that village youth often stop off on the way home from school to deposit change left over from their lunch or transportation money that day. Phra Phothiwirakhun has referred to this aspect, as well, saying that it could help solve some of the deeper financial problems in village:

> It fosters in children a habit of saving money and is a source of capital in the community, which [villagers] can access and rely upon in difficult times. Being poor is not hereditary. It can be solved with the help of the community[31]

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[31] Excerpted from a transcription of a speech given by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun in 2008, translation mine.

In addition, there are occasional financial training sessions aimed at members who are in debt, in which villagers are taught the values of frugality and saving in accordance with the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy. There is also a savings lottery in which villagers are able to participate by making deposits and keeping money in their accounts. One of the volunteers with whom I spoke attributed this savings lottery with helping to reduce gambling in the community. Villagers, she said, have been depositing the money they would normally spend on lottery tickets to have a better chance at winning with the BAAC.[32]

This emphasis on the prescriptive (that is – prescribing certain kinds of economic behavior) shows that the aim of the financial institution is not merely about giving the villagers access to these services. It is also an attempt to both mobilize and recontextualize extralocal systems and resources in a way that promotes specific community values. In establishing this kind of financial institution, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has also created a central node that links the villagers to extralocal financial networks and modern banking practices. However, this node does not simply function an *intermediary,* facilitating the connection without influencing it. Instead, the temple acts as *mediator*, transforming, translating, and contextualizing the meaning financial management in fundamental ways. On one hand, this entails using modern banking to formalize traditional financial practices and make them more efficient. On the other, it is about embedding modern banking in those traditional practices and in the relatedness associated with *place*.

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[32] Although it is the BAAC and not Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun that implements this lottery, it is interesting to note that this tactic to promote saving among the rural poor displays many of the hallmarks of networked localist practices. It is an attempt to promote a localist ideology (in this case, sufficiency economy) by adapting the tools of a decidedly non-localist system (the national lottery). It also seeks to curb what many consider to be vice in the communities by directing gambling activity into more acceptable channels.

The villagers have traditionally had no formal money-lending system in the community. Even after the establishment of a bank in the district capital, they often found borrowing money from others in the village more convenient than visiting the BAAC branch in town. Making the bank accessible is, thus, part of the key to its success. However, as Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun describes it, he is not merely making a facility more convenient to access, he is also (1) introducing the formalization that is characteristic of extralocal institutions into local lending practices and (2) infusing a formalized institution typically associated with non-place with the values of *place* that he attributes to the local community. He describes it in this way:

It used to be that the villagers would just informally lend money to each other. I borrow from you and you tell me [the conditions]. Now that there is a formal system in the village it helps. It is in the village, so they know who wants what and who needs what…and it lets them rely on each other rather than going outside the village where they may be taken advantage of. When the villagers go borrow 100 baht, [the outside lenders] will add on 200 baht in interest. But in the village we help each other. We can also come to know who is in need and what we can do to address that. (personal communication, May 14, 2016).

This re-appropriation of "the bank" is emblematic of the networked-localist approach. A bank with its convenience, bureaucracy, and clinical efficiency is a quintessential non-place and a paradigmatic symbol of supermodernity. It is a place more often than not portrayed as a faceless institution, we expect it to act as mere facilitator, allowing us to entrust and to have access to currency. Convenience is key, and the less time spent interacting directly with the bank itself, the better. However, *Wat* Phothikaram seeks to take the efficiency and convenience of the institution and re-embed it in a sense of community responsibility characteristic of

traditional more informal systems of saving money. It is re-contextualized as a community institution. In this way it is possible to describe it both in terms of a formalization of traditional lending and as a de-formalization of modern banking. It, thus, serves as a node/*moderator* linking local and extralocal. In a literal sense, it connects villagers to the BAAC. In broader terms, however, it serves to connect the village's traditional informal financial practices to those more formalized practices associated with extralocal institutions.

3.4.2   *Klum Tukata Thak* OTOP production center

Figure 3.8 - Exterior of the *Klum Tukata Thak* OTOP production center

Another major Sufficiency Economy-related activity in which Phra Phothiwirakhun has been involved is promoting the production of local goods as an extra source of income for villagers in the community. These are mostly sold through the Thai government's OTOP (One

Tambon One Product) [33] program, as well as online and at ceremonies and community development-related events. [34] These include small silk dolls and key chains, honey, and riceberry rice. Although none of the OTOP production centers are not located within the temple grounds, the silk dolls are produced in a detached house directly adjacent to the temple, and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun refers to it as a part of the community center.

The house belongs to R, a 36-year-old Ban Pho Noi native, and her husband. There is a large open room on the bottom story, which has been converted to serve as a storefront. The wall opposite the door is lined with large glass display cases and colorful wooden cabinets housing neatly-arranged rows of small silk-doll key chains. Atop the cabinets are display racks of various sizes from which hang more of the dolls. This area also serves as a workspace and on the floor there are often piles of the key chains ready to be packaged or sent off to be sold elsewhere.

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[33] More on OTOP in chapter 5.

[34] See, for example, the description of *Phra Hen Phra* in chapter 4.

Figure 3.9 - Interior of the OTOP Production Center

R began making crocheted dolls after seeing an instructional television program about knitting and crochet while she was away studying business in Bangkok. In 2004, she began selling them at Chatuchak, Bangkok's largest weekend market. The dolls were selling so well that she was unable to keep up with demand on her own. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun recommended that she outsource some of the work to others in the village, for whom it would serve as an extra source of income. The villagers who choose to participate take a two day to one-week training course, depending on their previous knitting/crocheting experience and earn 14-15 baht (about 40 cents) per unit. Currently, the program has expanded to seven villages in the district, and she has around forty people helping her with production of the dolls. He also advised that she start a website and sell the dolls wholesale over the internet. In 2012, he arranged for her and her husband to learn about web design at the temple ICT center, which enabled them to create and maintain a basic website. Through the website they began receiving international wholesale customers, with orders shipping out to Japan, Singapore, and the

United States among other countries.[35] In 2013, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun arranged for them

to sell through OTOP, which, according to her has greatly expanded her reach. "It is another

market through which we can sell goods. We used to have a much smaller market and it has

helped us become better known" (personal communication, October 27, 2015). They currently

sell about 2,000 units per month. However, she lamented that it has forced them to change

many of the ways they produce the dolls.

> They [OTOP representatives] come in and check our standards to make sure they
>
> are compliant with theirs. That means they inspect the workspace, employees,
>
> packaging, etc. They have to know the whole process … It's very difficult to meet
>
> the quality standards that they set (personal communication, October 27 2015).

In the case of *Klum Tukata Thak*, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun used OTOP and internet

resources to connect the business to venders and customers at the extralocal level. Moreover,

it is precisely through these connections that it was able to re-localize. Ready access to a variety

markets regardless of proximity allowed R to leave Bangkok and conduct her business in the

village, even providing work for other members of the community. Again, this displays the

simultaneous expansion and contraction that is at the heart of networked localism. Through

mobilization of and the provision of access to extralocal networks and resources, the local is

made more relevant and embeddedness therein seen as a feasible option for villagers attempting

improve their standards of living. However, for most of the villagers involved, it is not meant

to be a primary source of income. Instead, it is intended to teach the villagers about the local

business practices and self-reliance associated with the Sufficiency Economy philosophy

(OTOP itself is touted by the government as Sufficiency Economy in action). This node

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[35] Approximately 80% their export orders come from Japan, and most of these are from a single middle retailer.

functions as a *mediator*, connecting local doll makers to national and international markets while fundamentally altering the meaning of that relationship and of the practices involved

3.4.3   Sao Sen co-op

Figure 3.10 - Exterior of *Sao Sen* co-op

As part of his promotion of Sufficiency Economy, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun also opened a co-op convenience store and OTOP shop in the temple.[36] The name of the shop, *Sao Sen* reflects the philosophy upon which it is based. *Sao* is Isan dialect for "stop" and *sen* means to sign (as in one's signature). As he explains, "[It means] 'Stop Credit,' as expressed by Sufficiency Economy. It is to teach people that if they do not sign when they pay, they will use only [the money] they already have" (Phothiwirakhun, 2008, p. 5, translation mine). Originally, he had planned to make it exclusively an OTOP store, but eventually came to the conclusion that it would be impossible for it to survive as a business selling only OTOP items in the village.

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[36] As of this writing (May 2016), the shop is temporarily closed due to problems involving stock items not being checked or re-ordered. It is expected to open again after the committee is able to meet and come up with a solution.

OTOP products are marketed and priced in a way that is aimed at middle-class consumers and were, thus, likely to be bought only by visitors to the temple. He, thus, had it stocked with everyday items, like soda, snacks, detergent, etc., that would be of more use to the villagers in their daily lives. The co-op is owned and run by about 100 village shareholders and all of the profit from the shop is divided among the shareholders based on the amount they initially invested. It is managed by a committee of four of these shareholders. There is one employee running the day-to-day business of the shop, who is given a monthly wage of 3000-4000 baht (approximately 85-110 USD).

The shop is a single-room building with sliding glass doors. The bulk of its interior is occupied by three rows of metal-framed wooden shelves atop which various basic cooking ingredients, household cleaning products, coffee, and snack foods are arranged. There is a refrigerator containing water and cold soft drinks and a small freezer with ice and ice cream. There is a cashier counter that runs perpendicular to the entryway, behind which are glass display cases containing the OTOP honey, *nam phrik* (a spicy chili-based condiment), and riceberry rice produced in the village. The shop is lit by the sunlight that comes through the large windows at the front and side of the building. Effort has been taken to create an aesthetic link between the temple co-op and large chain convenience stores. There are three stripes that run along the outer windows and sliding glass doors – one orange, one green, and one red. These are nearly identical to those visible on the outside of every Seven Eleven (by far the most common convenience store in Thailand) storefront.[37] The sign affixed to the front of the shop also distinguishes it from the other buildings in the temple (See Figures 3.10). The signs marking the other buildings in the temple conform to a single style template. Only those

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[37] It is also common practice for locally-owned convenience stores in urban areas to mimic Seven Eleven's orange, green, and blue stripe motif in a similar fashion.

marking this building and the recently-built Café Potikaram (discussed in the previous section) differ from that template. The name *Sao Sen* is written in large red stylized letters, below which reads *Rankha Otop Chumchon Pho Noi Pho Sisawat* (Pho Noi and Pho Sisawat community OTOP shop). In addition to the difference in signage, the *Sao Sen* co-op and Café Phothikaram are the only buildings that have names that do not merely describe the building's function. It also differs in this respect from village shops in Ban Pho Noi/Pho Sisawat and elsewhere, which often do not have names. In addition to the outward aesthetic of the building the name helps to symbolically link it with the branding characteristic of convenience stores found in the city.

Figure 3.11 - Interior of *Sao Sen* co-op

Although this shop provides convenient access to affordable goods and a way for villagers to make money and improve their standards of living, these are not its main goals. Similar to the examples above, it is also meant to be a way to teach the villagers about Sufficiency Economy and self-reliance. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun especially emphasizes its role as a method of practical training in operating a community-oriented business. He says:

It is a way for [the villagers] to discover knowledge for themselves. If I just go and tell them "do it like this," they won't see for themselves. But if I have them manage it on their own, it will give them knowledge: "if we do it this way, it will be sustainable." If something does not work, they will know - they did it once and there were problems. Then they meet and decide on the best way to solve those problems (personal communication, May 14, 2016).

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun hopes that this kind of training will teach villagers how to make a living within the community and in a way that improves local quality of life. *Sao Sen* is also part of an overall strategy to re-enforce the centrality of the temple in village life. The abbot compares these amenities with those available at a gas station, drawing people into the temple – which is inextricably linked with local tradition and community identity – as they go about their daily lives.

In a gas station we can use the bathrooms, we can shop at Seven Eleven, we can go to Amazon [a nation-wide chain of coffee shops] or go to a restaurant, and fill our tires. It is a central hub. [Do this and] people will stop by the temple without thinking about it" (personal communication, March 10, 2013).

The success of this strategy is evidenced by groups of village children that gather there to buy juice and snacks before and after school every day. More importantly, he has taken the idea of a convenience store, a quintessential symbol of non-place and globalized society, and mobilized it in a way that embeds it in the localist values.

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The examples presented in this section represent Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's attempt to make the temple an economic hub in the village. The financial institution, OTOP production center, and *Sao Sen* co-op are all examples of nodes intended to act as *mediators* - connecting aspects of the local economy to extralocal systems and resources, while fundamentally altering their meaning. By rooting these points of access in Sufficiency Economy, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is attempting to mobilize these extralocal systems and re-contextualize economic practice around his vision of *place.* Taken together, they cover a number of critical aspects of economic activity (production, consumption, and finance). Moreover, these nodes are intended to extend far beyond the bounds of the practice sites (both literal and conceptual), themselves, into possible futures of local/extralocal economic conceptions and practices. In other words, they are designed to alter the way villagers understand and interact with and through the local and extralocal economic spheres. This demonstrates the extent to which these facilities are meant to occupy a position of *betweenness centrality* in village economic life and reimagine the *wat* as an economic hub.

3.5   The Temple as an Educational Hub – Making Local Culture Legible

As I mention above, every aspect of The Community Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram serves an underlying pedagogical function beyond its immediate purpose as a community facility. The financial center, co-op convenience store, and OTOP production center are means to teach people in the community the values espoused by the Sufficiency Economy philosophy. The ICT center, OTOP center, and convenience store are also all means for villagers to attain vocational training. In addition to the practical vocational experience offered therein, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun works closely with the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) to provide explicit training programs such as those on the use of IC

technology and the seminars on sufficiency economy mentioned above. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun also sees the act of engaging in this kind of activity, itself, as a kind of educational practice, although one aimed at monks in other villages. He says:

We have ... formal education programs like the children's center and informal education programs, like those connected to the ONIE and the ICT center. There are also monks who come to learn [through the monastic religious education program at the temple]. This is both religion and education ... they can see how to use economic elements of the temple and the ICT center, etc. Then [they can ask themselves], "can I apply this in my temple?" (personal communication, September 14, 2016).

Thus, the temple's educational function pervades all activities in which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is engaged there and it is primarily in this way that the temple can be considered an educational hub for the village. However, there are some facilities in the temple that relate more directly to education. Although these do not have as central a role in the educational sphere of the community as those described above, they do contribute to *Wat* Phothikaram's *betweenness centrality* in this sphere and, thus, bear mentioning here. These are the *Wat* Phothikaram Small Children's Development Center (*Sun Pattana Dek Lek*), the *Wat* Phothikaram Cultural Center in Honor of the King (*Sun Wattanatham Chaloem Rat Wat Phothikaram*), and the Radio Station for the Study of Buddhism (*Satani Witayu Pua Gan Suksa Phraphutttasasana*). In addition, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun works closely with the teachers and administrators in local public schools to provide educational resources for the students. I describe these facilities and their implications for the temple as an educational hub in the village below.

3.5.1 Education and local culture – *Wat* Phothikaram Cultural Center in Honor of the King and the Radio Station for the Study of Buddhism

The *Wat* Phothikaram Cultural Center in Honor of the King (hereafter referred to as the cultural center) was established in its current form with funding from the Department of Cultural Promotion. According to budgetary documents provided to me by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, the center was created with the goal of "collecting and exhibiting the traditional local cultural wisdom of the community, including vocational support in the community in accordance with Sufficiency Economy." Many of the functions attributed to the cultural center overlap with those in other parts of the temple. This is especially true of the "vocational support" aspect of the center, which takes the form of a small amount of financial support for *Wat* Phothikaram's ICT center and OTOP-related activities. The activities attributed to the cultural center are, thus, extremely diffuse and have, for the most part, been discussed in previous sections. Therefore, here I will only focus on the physical center and those aspects of the facility that relate to the collection and exhibition of local traditional culture.

Before 2014, there was no formal building for the display of cultural artifacts. Instead, *Wat* Phothikaram had what Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun casually referred to as a "museum" (*phiphithaphan*) of cultural artifacts. This was a covered outdoor area, which housed a small collection of tools traditionally used in the northeast in planting and harvesting crops, as well as a loom and various cooking implements. According to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, there were also regular demonstrations and workshops to educate the younger villagers in the use of these tools, although I never saw any of these demonstrations during my time at the temple. He describes the purpose of this endeavor thusly:

Young people today don't see what kind of [implements and tools] people used in the past, how people earned their livings in the past...So we have them see the traditional way of life - the culture of previous generations; to let them see the actual physical objects that show us where we came from and how we have developed and to connect that culture with today's culture ...This is a way to educate [the villagers] about how these tools are used. Sometimes we use these [kinds of tools]; sometimes we don't. Similar to mobile phones, these are the older models ... In some cases these can still be used, for example pulleys, fish traps, nets, etc. and they can learn about how to use these here (personal communication, September 14, 2016).

In 2012, the Thai government's Department of Cultural Promotion (DCP) began the "Cultural Center Project in Honor of the King" (*Khronggan Sun Watthanatham Chaloem Rat*), which allocated resources for the establishment of dozens of "cultural centers" in villages around the country. The DCP defines a "cultural center" as "A place that is a center for the collection of knowledge and activities related to traditional local cultural wisdom established to honor His Majesty, the King" (DCP, n.d., p. 2, translation mine). The stated goals of the project are to (1) To honor the king on the occasion of his 85 birthday, (2) to develop cultural locations to compile, preserve, transmit, and apply traditional cultural wisdom, (3) to establish data centers for communities' cultural knowledge, (4) to support multilateral collaboration in cultural matters among government institutions, the private sector, and residents, and (5) to promote and advance the continuation of traditional wisdom and to make it into objects and services in the "creative economy" (ibid). *Wat* Phothikaram was selected to be the site of one of these cultural centers. According to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, this is because the temple

was already engaged in the kinds of activities being promoted by the program, particularly his ICT center, work with OTOP, and exhibitions/demonstrations of local artifacts and their use.

Figure 3.12 - *Wat* **Phothikaram Cultural Center in Honor of the King**

In addition to allocating funding to various temple projects, in 2014, the DCP turned one of the lesser-used buildings in the temple into an official cultural center. The building is a large rectangular open hall with windows running along the length of the room. The walls are lined with display cases containing small implements traditionally used in food preparation, a small assortment of *Isan* musical instruments, photocopies of posters for films about northeast Thailand, Buddha images and other religious artifacts, temple documents, and awards granted to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and *Wat* Phothikaram. The walls along the length of the room are covered in illustrated posters promoting the king's contribution to rural development. On the wall at one end of the room is a mural depicting the king standing on a round red and gold platform that is floating in a pond encircled by lotus leaves. The opposite wall contains a mural depicting an agrarian scene with the temple pavilion in the background. In the center of the mural is a sign reading "The *Wat* Phothikaram Cultural Center in Honor of the King - Development Monk Leaders in Pathumrat District," below which are pictures and profiles of

five monks from previous generations and their contributions to the area's development.[38] The only furnishings in the room that are not set against the walls are a round wooden table, upon which sits a *Ranat Ek* (a Thai percussion instrument) and an alter with a Buddha image, votive candles and incense, and a clock to measure the length of meditation sessions. The latter is present because the room is often used as a meditation training center for children in the area.

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun describes the recent addition of the cultural center building in this way:

> In the past we did not have a permanent building, just a storage area in the temple. Now we have a distinct place - a building, display cases. But we did not create this to be just a static museum or cultural center (personal communication, September 14, 2016).

He says the cultural center is not "static" (*ning*) because, although this building may be the center's fixed/permanent manifestation, it is only a small part of the functions it carries out with regard to the representation of local culture. At nearly every public event organized by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun there are also performative demonstrations meant to represent local culture. There are usually *mor lam* (a style of music native to northeast Thailand) and traditional dance performances, as well as the display and sale of food and handicrafts that have been chosen to symbolize traditional culture in the area. If there are honored guests, such as high-level government officials, the event may also include the *su khwan* or soul/spirit-tying ritual. This is a ritual common in Laos and northeast Thailand, in which a folk Brahman practitioner

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[38] This is a retroactive application of the title, "development monk" by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, as these monks who were mainly active before the term had come into common use.

called a "spirit doctor" (*mo khwan*) calls upon a person's *khwan* (parts of the spirit that are believed to frequently leave the body and become scattered, causing misfortune or illness) to return to the body, at which point they are bound by tying a white cotton string around the person's wrist.[39] According to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, all of these aspects of his practice fall under the purview of the cultural center.

It is important to note that while there are some aspects of the cultural center that are intended to teach the local residents about traditional local practices, much of the cultural center's activities are aimed at outsiders. The ceremonies and rituals are usually performed at events that are either held in other provinces or at which there will be important guests visiting from Bangkok or elsewhere. The objects and information on display in the center are also meant to introduce visitors to selected aspects of the region and the temple's history and to represent local identity. They are collected and arranged with the intention to show visitors what Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun calls "Roi Et-ness" (*khwam pen Roi Et*).[40] In this sense, it is also an attempt at local legibility. As I discuss in the previous chapter, part of the localist endeavor is to represent local identity in a way that makes it legible at the extra-local level. In this case legibility is achieved – at least in part – by embedding elements of traditional local identity cultural practices in a nationalist context. In the cultural center building, for example, objects that represent "local culture" and "local identity" are literally surrounded by (much more prominent) symbols and representations of the monarchy, of national culture and "Thai-ness." The traditional handicrafts generally tend to be those that have been accepted and

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[39] For more about the *su khwam* ceremony, see Tambiah (1970) and Kirsch (1977).

[40] This is an interesting way to phrase this, as it mirrors the concept of "Thai-ness" (*kwam pen thai*), often used by Thai nationalists to assert a common national culture and identity that both distinguishes the Thai from the non-Thai and overrides local or regional differences. See Tannenbaum (2000), Reynolds (2001), Delcore(2003).

approved to be part of the national OTOP program. The cultural center in its current form is, itself, a state project. It is regional culture expressed in national terms.[41]

In this sense, the cultural center contributes to the temple's role as an educational hub in two ways. First, it becomes the medium through which the village educates outsiders about itself. Local culture is reified, represented, and related through the physical displays in the temple and demonstrations at local and extralocal events in which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and *Wat* Phothikaram are involved. Second, it is focused on educating local villagers about both local tradition through physical and practical representation, and the creation of these representations and their application in achieving economic gain (for example, by training villagers in the making and selling of OTOP products) and extralocal legibility. As such, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun describes this endeavor less as "preservation" of local culture in the face of modernization and globalization, than as representation of local culture within that new context. He says:

> [Local culture] isn't disappearing. In some sense we are preserving culture, but that is not the main point. What we primarily do is make it so that people can come see [local culture] ... The cultural center creates a single place where people can come see it. It is not that traditions and culture are disappearing, we are just putting them into a clearer format. This is a place ... We are just making it so that these things exist in a place (personal communication, September 14, 2016).

For Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, thus, the cultural center (both in terms of its physical presence in the temple and related performances) is about using the *wat* as a place in which cultural

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[41] I explore this notion of the state appropriation of locality in detail in Chapter 5.

elements scattered throughout various aspects of village life can be collected, distilled, and displayed. Importantly, it is – once again – the temple that acts as mediator in the representation process, as it is the location (both physically and symbolically) where this embodiment takes place.

Another of *Wat* Phothikaram's projects in which representation of local culture and education are intertwined was the *Satani Witayu Pua Gan Suksa Phraphutttasasana* or The Radio Station for the Study of Buddhism. This was a short-lived local radio station operating out of *Wat* Phothikaram. It is no longer broadcasting, however, as it (along with many other community radio stations) was ordered shut down by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO, the military junta currently in power) after the 2014 coup.[42] The NCPO had required all broadcast outlets to attain formal permission in order to continue operation, and according to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun the radio station at *Wat* Phothikaram was not granted permission due to the large number of stations already broadcasting in the area. I include it here, however, as it is a relevant example of local-extralocal translation (in this case involving actual linguistic translation) of knowledge in which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has been engaged.

The radio station was not originally part of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's plans for the temple, but that of the provincial ecclesiastic office (hence the name of the station). However, the *Wat* Phothikaram's broadcast programming was not limited to meditation or sermons. Along with the religious programming, it was also focused on conveying the day's news and other information in a way that was culturally relevant to the local villagers. Daily programs

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[42] In the wake of the 2014 military takeover of the government, the NCPO ordered thousands of community radio stations to be shut down in order to ensure "the truthful dissemination of information to citizens" (see: http://www.thaigov.go.th/index.php/th/ncpo-annonncement/item/84675-id84675).

had titles such as "*Luk Thung*[43] News and Songs" (*Luk Thung Kao Lae Phleng*), "The ONIE[44] Takes You to Study" (*Go So No Pathumrat Pha Rian Ru*), "Phonsung municipality Meets the People" (*Thesaban Phonsung Phop Brachashon*), and "*Isan* Heritage" (*Moradok Isan*).

I was able to sit in on a broadcast of "*Luk Thung* News and Songs" before the station was forced to shut down in 2014. The broadcast booth was located in a small room under the main pavilion. There was a single desk in one corner of the room, atop which was a desktop computer, a mixing board, and overhead microphone stand. The programming schedule was listed on a poster on the wall above the desk. This particular program was produced by a Roi Et resident who goes by the nickname "Thao Nophadok," who works with a small group *Isan* speakers to dub television shows and films, such as those of Charlie Chaplin, in *Isan* dialect.[45] The group is dedicated to both making media more accessible to *Isan* residents and preserving *Isan* language. For "*Luk Thung* News and Songs" the broadcaster would play *Isan* music and read the day's news using *Isan* language. During the broadcast I observed, Thao Nophadok would sit with a newspaper open on the desk and read from it directly translating the contents from Thai into *Isan* in real time.

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun describes the ability to broadcast in the local language as one of the major benefits to there being a community radio station. Although all of the villagers understand the central dialect, he says the translation into "Lao"[46] means that communication is easier and can happen faster, especially for elderly villagers. He describes it as giving them

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[43] *Luk thung* is a style of Thai country music that evolved out of *mor lam.* It is notable as it has gained national popularity despite its lyrics generally being in the *Isan* dialect (Miller, 2005).

[44] Office of Non-formal and Informal Education

[45] An example can be found online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9Quga6UsFE

[46] *Isan* dialect is often called "Lao," especially by residents of the northeast, because of its similarity to Laotian.

"access to understanding" (*khaothung khwam khaochai*). In this way, the temple radio station served as a mediator between local and extralocal forms of knowledge, making extralocal knowledge more accessible to those in the local community. It is, in a sense, the reverse of the educational function of the cultural center. The cultural center uses the language of nationalism and the extralocal in order to express local culture and make it legible. The radio station, on the other hand, was an attempt to make extralocal knowledge legible and accessible at the local level through its expression in local language.

In both of these cases, education takes the form of *explicit culture* – by which I mean that the symbols used to transmit knowledge, as well as the knowledge being transmitted, are conscious representations of group history and identity. The cultural center and related activities are an attempt to transmit and represent traditional local culture and "local wisdom," legitimizing it and rendering it legible at the extralocal level through its reification and presentation as part of a national narrative. Similarly, it is an example of the temple mediating the ways in which the local community represents itself to itself through a narrative of regional identity. As I mention above, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun speaks of this endeavor as a way of connecting modernity with local tradition, making it relevant to the younger generation in the village.

When in operation, the radio station was similarly an attempt to transmit knowledge in a way that made local culture relevant. In this case this meant using local symbols – *Isan* language – to represent extralocal knowledge. However, this was not merely about granting access to this information. As all of the villagers were able to understand central Thai, there was no need for it to be translated from that standpoint. However, making the local language the means of knowledge transmission serves to both reaffirm the legitimacy of that language

and to re-contextualize the extralocal knowledge being conveyed into a local framework and re-embed it in community consciousness (*place*). Both of these examples are ways in which local and extralocal knowledge and cultural representations are conveyed through and mediated by the temple in a way that attempts simultaneously connect the local and extralocal, while retaining the relevance of local forms of knowledge and communication.

3.5.2 Formal Youth Education – Collaboration with local schools and The Small Children's Development Center

As I mention above, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's involvement in education in the village pervades all aspects of his practice. He works closely with the municipal government and the schools in Ban Pho No/Sisawat and neighboring villages to integrate temple activities and formal education in the community. This includes collaborating with local educators and administrators to improve the curricula at local schools. As the director of Ban Pho Noi Elementary School told me,

> Since the beginning, [Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun] has helped support [the school] in all areas involving ideas for education. He is an educator, after all. He helps us come up with ideas and expand in areas that facilitate the school (personal communication, September 1, 2015).

He said that Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun would also work with local schools to develop IT programs.

In the beginning the school didn't have computers so [the students] would come here to use [the computers in the temple]...now we have computers, but only basic computer courses...[So] We worked out a schedule with the abbot, and we will sometimes send the students here to learn about ICT ... Whenever there is a program, both the students and teachers will often come to learn here" (ibid).

In addition, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun also works with local school administrators to arrange special courses given by guest teachers. Often this means sending monks from the nearby monastic university to conduct lessons on ethics and Buddhism. However, he has also been involved in connecting local administrators with laypeople who have skills or knowledge in a particular field in order that they may volunteer to teach at the schools. On one of my initial visits to the temple, for example, he arranged for me to spend several weeks teaching English in local elementary and high schools. It was Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun who instigated this arrangement, inquiring at our first meeting about my interest in volunteering. When I agreed, he then contacted local school administrators in order to develop a concrete plan. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun also acted as coordinator throughout the process, arranging my schedule and transportation to and from one elementary school and two high schools in the area. This is an important point, as it demonstrates the active role he plays in local-extralocal mediation. He is not merely facilitating connections, but actively looking for potential connections to facilitate. When I asked about his role as mediator/facilitator in these kinds of endeavors he said:

Can I build a building, teach IT, or teach language? Can I go and work in a bank? No I cannot. There has to be someone to take these duties on. But is there a service I can offer? The community and the children that come to learn need teachers. I

may not be able to teach, but I can be an advisor, to be the starting point, and come

up with the idea (personal communication, August 4, 2013).

The temple is the point that links extralocal resources with local actors and institutions. Even when the temple is not explicitly called upon to provide these resources, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is often opportunistic (I mean that without the negative connotations the word often implies) in attempting to create connections that he feels could benefit the community, especially with regard to education. I often, for example, found myself teaching impromptu English classes when Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun spotted groups of children (and on one occasion adults) in the temple. He is constantly searching for ways to facilitate the connection between the community and extralocal resources (in this case, I was that resource). This underlies much of his practice and demonstrates one way in which the temple has come to occupy a central position in various divergent spheres of life in the community.

Figure 3.13 - The *Wat* Phothikaram Small Children's Development Center

While most Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's education-related endeavors either take the form of temporary/situational courses or as embedded aspects of his other projects, there is one permanent facility that is devoted to more formalized education with a regular schedule and

curriculum. Across the road from the main grounds of the temple is the Small Children's Development Center (*Sun Phattana dek lek* - hereafter referred to as the children's center), which is focused on providing the village children with a pre-school education. The building is surrounded by a multicolored picket fence, which encloses a grassy yard arranged with various types of playground equipment. The building has a single classroom, which is roughly divided into two sections. There is a large open area where the children sit or lie on red-tiled floors during lessons and activities (there are no chairs or desks aside from those for the teachers). The walls in this area is lined with the kinds of posters and decorations one would expect to see in a preschool: children's drawings, counting guides, maps, etc., and there are boxes of blocks and other children's toys in clear plastic containers on the floor. Behind the teachers' desks, which mark the end of the children's area, the walls are lined with file cabinets and shelves containing logbooks and other paperwork. The area, thus, functions as a makeshift office/lounge area where the teachers engage in the aspects of education, such as curriculum planning and clerical work, that do not directly involve teaching.

The children taught at the center range in age from two to four years old, based on which they are divided into two groups and taught by two volunteers. There are currently five teachers working at the center and 50 children registered (with 30-40 of the registered children attending regularly). The center was established in 1999 by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, who managed it himself until recently, when that responsibility was transferred to the municipality. In 2014, there was a new head of the municipality who agreed to fund the center with the stipulation that it be administered by the Department of Local Affairs (DLA) , be based on the municipal model, and follow the DLA curriculum. According to S, a 51-year-old Ban Pho Noi resident and a teacher at the children's center, this change has meant having to comply with stricter top-down regulation with regard to budget and curriculum.

S has been working at the school since it was founded in 1999, when Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun approached her for the position based on her already having an active role in the community managing temple and village affairs. Like many of the other villagers involved in Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's development projects, she was born in Ban Pho Noi and moved to Bangkok to study before moving back to her home village and working with the Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun. She spoke of the focus on standardization that occurred when the municipality took over the children's center. "The TOA[47] has four centers and makes sure they are all administrated in the same way" (personal communication, October 28, 2015). She also made note of the increased reliance on the centralized decisions of a bureaucratic hierarchy regarding budget, policy, and curriculum.

> [When we need something for the center], it must be very systematic. We have to make a program, along with the budget, which we submit to the head of the municipality, who then submits it to his superior, who will bring it to the minister who gives it to his boss. It goes up step by step. Then there is the matter of whether or not they approve… It can take up to a year. (personal communication, October 28, 2015).

She contrasts this to when the temple was in charge of administration of the children's center, saying that the teachers in the center had more freedom to plan their own curricula and only had to seek Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's approval for budgetary items. Currently, the school is operated in a similar manner as other non-temple children's centers. The one exception,

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[47] The Tambon (subdistrict) Administration Organization – the most local branch of government in charge of community development.

according to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is that, in addition to the secular curriculum, there is also some religious instruction. However, it is the regular teachers, not Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun or any of the other monks in the temple who conduct these lessons.

Since the municipality took over management of the center, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun has not had an active role in its administration. Despite this, he still sees the children's center as an integral part of *Wat* Phothikaram's role as a center for education in the village, and likens it to the temple's traditional role as village school. This underscores the way in which this children's center is simultaneously an attempt to allow the community access to extralocal resources and to re-embed the institution in what he sees as traditional local culture. By operating this facility as a part of the DLA's national program, it is also a way in which the temple becomes a mediator through which extralocal educational resources can be procured. However, as part of the temple, he sees it as a symbolic representation of traditional education practices in the community.

Both Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's collaboration with local schools and the temple children's center are aimed at both providing more formal education in the community while rooting it in the traditional role of the temple in village life. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's work to develop educational programs and curricula with local teachers and school administrators is an attempt to connect the local to extralocal resources in the form of guest instructors, as well as IC technology and expertise. This demonstrates his active role in forming networked connections that he and the temple will play a pivotal role in facilitating, thus simultaneously allowing and reaffirming the temple's role as an educational hub in the village. The children's center has similarly become a means by which resources from outside the village are mobilized for the purpose of education in the community. Furthermore, it does so in a way that

symbolically links it to traditional local cultural practices and maintains the temple's pivotal role in education in the village.

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These explicit educational endeavors work in tandem with the underlying pedagogical aspects of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's economic and technological activities to make the temple an educational hub in the village. They are representative of networked localist practice in that they are aimed at connecting the local community to extralocal resources in ways that both allow access to those resources and embed them in *place* as represented by community identity, relations, and history. The culture center and the radio station are direct attempts to represent local cultural knowledge, practices, and symbols in ways that are legible from within a modern/extralocal framework and *vice versa* – both through the explicit transmission "local knowledge" and the use of local symbols to represent extralocal knowledge. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's work related to formal education similarly attempt localize resources that would otherwise be unavailable in the community, and to do so in a way that reasserts the relevance of the temple as mediator and facilitator in village education. It is worth noting that these cases also show the state beginning to adopt a similar strategy. In the cases of both the cultural center and the children's center, after 2014, the state became a primary source of the funding of these facilities and began to take a more proactive role in their administration (the radio station was shut down by government authorities during the same time period). In addition, it did so through the provision of funding and administrative resources born out of an ostensive drive to support localist endeavors (I will explore this subject in detail in Chapter 5).

Conclusion

The Community Learning Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram is an endeavor that is emblematic of networked-localist practice at the village level. It is fundamentally an attempt to reassert local relevance, authority, and identity in the daily lives of the villagers, but does so through the creation of local-extralocal connections and the appropriation of extralocal tools and symbols. This is best described in terms of the creation of "nodes" and "hubs" that facilitate links between local communities to extralocal networks and systems. The financial center in *Wat* Phothikaram, for example acts as a node, linking the village with the BAAC and, more broadly, to banking systems and services in general. When taken in concert with the temple's other economic endeavors (the OTOP center, convenience store, etc.), it underscores Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's attempt to give the temple central role in bridging the gap between the local economic sphere with national/global economic systems, symbols, and resources. Specifically, it aims to locate the temple to a position of *betweenness centrality,* where its elimination would fundamentally alter the way the local and extralocal are connected with regard to the economic realm. The same is true of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's multi-pronged involvement in IC technology in the village. However, I would argue that this is most apparent his work in the educational sphere (it is not by accident that the temple facilities are collectively referred to as "The Community *Learning* Center in Honor of *Wat* Phothikaram"). This is because his education-related goals are inherent to every project in which he is engaged at the temple, even if pedagogy is not its sole aim (as it is in facilities such as the children's center). A major component of the ICT center and Community Digital Center, for example, is the incorporation of teaching/training programs regarding the use of such technology. The OTOP production center is both intended to be a means for villagers to earn extra money in the community and a tool to help them learn about proper financial management and economic self-sufficiency (as prescribed by the Sufficiency Economy philosophy). Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun sees all of these

as ways for the temple to mobilize resources otherwise unavailable in the village and cement the temple's position there as an educational hub.

It is critical to note, however, that terms such as "node," "hub," and "betweenness centrality" as I use them here are not absolute, nor are they objective. This is because I am not concerned with determining whether or not the temple is *actually* occupying a place of betweenness centrality and operating as a node or network hub. What is important is that Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is positioning the temple to function as such, as doing so allows for the *mobilization* of this networked connection toward re-embedding modern village life in *place*, as opposed to merely allowing the villagers access to extralocal resources. Of course, allowing access in itself is part of the networked-localist imperative. Granting village-level access to typically extra-local resources, such as banking services and high-speed internet is a means to bolster the relevance of the local community in people's lives by reducing the necessity to seek these resources outside the village. However, it is important not to consider Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's village-level endeavors *only* in these terms. As I describe above, the temple is not simply acting as an *intermediary*, facilitating the connection between local and extralocal without affecting it in any fundamental way. Instead, it is better understood as a *mediator* as it plays an active role in shaping that connection, simultaneously altering the form and meaning of what is conveyed (the resources, knowledge, or services being provided) and the relationship among the nodes it connects (the local village/villagers and extralocal systems, actors, and organizations). In doing so, he is able to use these extralocal/supermodern symbols and resources to reestablish the relevance of the temple and the values associated with *place* in the village.

In this account of *Wat* Phothikaram we also begin to see the collaborative elements of networked-localist development practice. In every example above, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun

acts as an intermediary to some extent, mobilizing the support of outside actors and organizations in order to further his localist development goals. In recent years, much of this support has come from the state. I describe above, for example, how Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's ICT center and related vocational training is partially funded by the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), the cultural center is supported by the Department of Cultural Promotion, and the Community Digital Center was funded by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. The central role Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple plays in village life has made it an attractive medium by which government agencies can implement their development projects at the village level. When I asked Dr. Uttama Savanayana, the now former (then current) Minister of Information and Communication Technology about why they chose *Wat* Phothikaram as the cite for the nation's first Community Digital Center, he answered,

> It is because [Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun] is already equipped [to do this]. The first center must be somewhere that is prepared. [*Wat* Phothikaram] has a strong leader, and he has been consistently engaged in this kind of work [for many years]. [We chose to do it here because] there is a leader in the community (personal communication, July 30, 2016).

In the following chapters I delve deeper into this collaborative aspect of networked localism, as well as some of the more problematic implications of the extensive involvement of the state therein.

4 A Community of Monastic Development Practice – Collaborative Development monk Networks

In this chapter, I examine the collaborative networks that have both arisen out of and promoted the spread of networked-localist development practice among development monks. As I described in Chapter 2, the past two decades have seen a significant decline in NGOs and other neolocalist activists supporting individual monastic development projects. Instead, much of the support for monastic development activism has come from either government agencies or the monks, themselves (far more often the former than the latter). Partially as a way of more effectively mobilizing this kind of government support, development monks have begun to form large-scale networks spanning regions and, in one case described below, the entire nation. Not only do these networks provide development monks with a greater capacity to attracting and distributing government support, they are also forums in which ideas and strategies regarding monastic development projects can be developed, shared, and reproduced. I argue here that as a result this kind of extensive collaboration, development monks have come to act as a "community of practice," within which skills regarding their practice are honed, shared meanings are negotiated, and monastic development practice is reified and reproduced. As examples of this phenomenon, I will describe the two largest development-monk networks in the northeast, the Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (PDSNO) and Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors. I also give accounts of two events arranged by these organizations (one from each). The first of these accounts (a PDSNO meeting) illustrates the ways in which practices are integrated/coordinated, meanings related to those practices are negotiated, and reifications are produced. The second, an event called *Phra Hen Phra*, demonstrates how those reifications are exhibited/displayed and the practices they represent are reproduced.

4.1 Development monks as a community of practice

In Chapter 5, I will argue that an important upshot of the kind of large-scale collaboration and formalization to come out of the networked-localist movement is the formation of a kind of symbolic and practical "infrastructure" (primarily facilitated by the state) that has come to underlie localist monastic activism in Thailand. A defining characteristic of infrastructure, according to Star and Ruhleder is that it is "learned as a part of membership" in a *community of practice*. They write, "Strangers and outsiders encounter infrastructure as a target object to be learned about. New participants acquire a naturalized familiarity with its objects as they become members" (1996, p. 113). Once this familiarity is achieved, its prevalence within the community of practice causes it to be bound up with identity as part of that community. Bowker and Star (1999) give the example of the Nursing Interventions Classification system (NIC, a standard system that classifies various interventions performed by nurses in order to improve patient outcomes). They contend that because it is such a critical part of nursing training, knowledge about the NIC and its use become symbols of inclusion in the nursing community. They write, "Because of the ways [the NIC] is propagated it is closely tied with what it means to *be* a nurse" (p. 238). In order to fully understand the concept of infrastructure in this sense, thus, it is important to first explore the "landscape of practice" (Wenger, 1998) of monastic development activism through which it acts. Here, I begin to lay the groundwork for this understanding by exploring the ways in which the collaborative aspect of networked localist endeavors has led to the formation of extralocal communities of practice, both among individual development monks and development monks and government entities.

The idea of *communities of practice* as espoused by Lave and Wenger (1991) is one that has been so widely adopted and appropriated by practitioners of various disciplines

(anthropology, management science, informatics, etc.) that it has become nearly impossible to pin it down to a single concept. Wenger has since given the term an appropriately vague definition as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (2006, p. 1). The lack of an explicit descriptive definition, however, does not detract from the term's usefulness. This is because it is best understood, not as a specific thing, but as a handy point of reference when attempting to understand the various ways in which group identity, practice, and knowledge production/transmission interact and are mutually constructed. Here, I will be referring to networked-localist development monks as having become a "community of practice" in order to highlight the ways in which situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) through collaborative engagement in particular types of activist practice has created a community within which shared norms, meanings, and identity are negotiated.

While a community of practice is not a rigorously defined homogeneous group, it acts as a framework through which practices and ideology can be codified, transmitted, and legitimated - albeit one that is constantly being renegotiated as it is contested and reaffirmed from within. As Lave and Wenger put it,

> We assume that members have different interests, make diverse contributions to activity, and hold varied viewpoints … Nor does the term community imply a well-defined identifiable group, or socially visible boundaries. It does imply participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities (1991, p. 98).

The large-scale development-monk networks that have come to dominate the landscape of monastic activism consist of members that come from a wide range of communities, backgrounds, and development interests. However, there is a certain amount of practical and conceptual homogenization that takes place as strategies are shared and evaluated, goals and policies are agreed upon, and funding is allocated. These processes occur primarily in two ways: (1) through explicit negotiation in temple meeting rooms, as well as the literary artefacts (Barton & Hamilton, 2005) produced there (group charters, PowerPoint documents, etc.) and (2) through the presentation of monastic development activism in contexts such as exposition-like ceremonies and festivals, as well as multimedia representations (displayed on posters and television screens and shared through pamphlets, DVDs, and social media). It is important to note, however, that I do not mean that any of these networks, in and of itself, *is* the community of practice. Instead, these are conduits through which the community of practice arises and functions, as they work to create ties among practitioners through which shared understandings, practices, and reifications of those practices develop.[1]

One of the key characteristics of a community of practice is its focus on the production and transmission of knowledge and skills. Development monk groups such as Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (PDSNO) and Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors discussed in this chapter were created with the specific goal of developing and sharing more effective strategies for monks to engage in community activism. That is, these groups are formed (at least in part) in order to hone the practices of the monks involved – to "learn how to do it better." The other reason I was given for the creation of these kinds of networks is the ability to more effectively mobilize and gain

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[1] A close analogue may be found in academia. While practicing anthologists, as linked by various universities, organizations, international conferences, etc. can be described as a community of practice, no single group – no matter how influential (for example, the American Anthropological Association) *is* the global network of anthropologists.

access to material, organizational, and knowledge-related resources, especially from the state and other non-monastic entities. Both of these contribute to the formation of a division (albeit a mutable one) between what Lave and Wenger refer to as "peripherality" and "full participation." Core members with the greatest understanding of the skills and strategies that have been honed through group participation and who have the greatest influence in procuring and allocating resources end up defining (at least implicitly) what counts as *legitimate peripheral participation*. As Lave and Wenger point out, "Hegemony over resources for learning and alienation from full participation are inherent in the shaping of the legitimacy and peripherality of participation in its historical realizations" (1991, p. 92). They relate the idea of legitimacy to that of "belonging," through which one can begin to learn and practice as a peripheral part of the community and contend that it is through legitimate peripheral participation that one is able to become part of a community of practice. Importantly, these three aspects – legitimacy, peripherality, and participation – are mutually constructed, meaning that each is "indispensable in defining the others and cannot be considered in isolation" (p. 35). Both development monk networks and state support for these kinds of practices reinforce and reproduce monastic development activism as a community of practice by providing tools and blueprints for legitimate peripheral participation. Engagement in existing or ready-made activist practices, such as selling local products through OTOP or heading anti-drinking campaigns in collaboration with the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPN), are ways in which newcomers can immediately gain access to and legitimacy within the development monk community. This aspect is especially apparent in the programs aimed at finding and training "disciples" (monks to inherit carry on current practices) described below, which in part, work to codify legitimate peripheral partition in monastic development practice.

It is important to note that I am not referring to each individual development monk network as a distinct community of practice, as these separate groups cannot be understood as existing in isolation. Although the organizations differ in scope and (to a limited extent) in the types of projects they carry out, they are often populated by varying configurations of the same groups of monks and supported by the same government organizations (such as the THPF). Because of this it is "development monks" as a networked-localist group meta-identity that exhibits these characteristics. Prior to the formation of these kinds of self-proclaimed development monk organizations, the label of "development monk" was one that was applied by academics and commentators *post hoc* to individual or small groups of monks who engaged in community activism of various types. Interestingly, academics have played a large role in the formation of these groups and the construction of "development monk" as a group identity. Pinit Lapthananon at Chulalongkorn University's Social Research Institute,[2] for example, has been instrumental in organizing monks in the northeast and connecting them with national networks. In 2006, he published a directory of 30 monks whom he considered to fit the definition of development monk that were active in the northeast in 2004-2005 (Lapthananon, 2006b), and in 2012, he published an updated version titled "Directory of Development Monks in Northeast Thailand 2011-2012," which profiled 37 monks, organized by province (Lapthananon, 2012b). This second directory also functioned as the network roster of the representatives in the PDSNO (discussed in detail in the next section). Each listing in the directory follows an identical format, which includes a photograph of the monk, a summary of his development philosophy and activities, and relevant contact information. He published these books, he says, as part of an attempt to increase communication and collaboration among development monks, as well as among development monks and outside organizations. Importantly, however, they are also acts of definition and demarcation, codifying and bounding

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[2] The academic described in the Introduction who introduced me to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun.

the notion of development monk through group participation and collected standardized presentation.

Figure 4.1 Cover [left] and development monk profile [right] from Pinit Lapthananon's "Directory of Development Monks in Northeast Thailand 2011-2012"

This kind of representation is essential to the production and reproduction of communities of practice. As the practitioners interact they create both abstract and concrete *reifications* of the practice, which both represent and shape the practice, as well as the community engaged in that practice. Keating describes this process thus: "In participating in everyday social action, individuals change to meet other individuals' ways of doing things, in a constant negotiation of meanings that implies *participating* in practice and *reifying* it, or producing reifications about it" (2005, p. 108). Wenger defines reification in this context as "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'... A certain understanding is given form. This form then becomes the focus for the negotiation of meaning" (1998, pp. 58-59). The products of reification (which he also refers

to as "reifications") can take a myriad of forms, including objects (such as documents), abstractions (such as definitions or classification systems), processes, etc. These reifications both represent negotiated meaning and are tools by which future negotiations of meaning take place. Because of this, they symbolize and help create the shared understandings around which communities of practice are constructed. As Barton and Hamilton write, "Reification entails not only the negotiation of shared understandings but also enables particular forms of social relations to be shaped in the process of participation" (2005, p. 26). The collaborative landscape that has emerged as part of networked localist development practice has provided a framework in which these kinds of shared reifications regarding monastic development practice can be produced. As I detail in the following sections, these reifications often take the form of concrete literacy artefacts such as OTOP products and pamphlets distributed at meetings. However, they can also be more abstract, as in the phrase "*batchai siang*" (risk factors), used to refer to specific types of perceived problems at the village level (discussed in detail in section 4.3) and even development monk networks themselves. They are concise, portable, shared representations of both what is being reified and of the reification process itself.

Often times, this process of reification also implies some *commensurability*,[3] as particulars of one context are mutually understood as able to be transplanted into another. The notion of commensurability is a key element in understanding how localist ideology is employed in development practices. In a hypothetical purely top-down model of development, meaning at the local level would be understood as completely commensurable with that at the level of the extralocal/non-local. Centralized one-sized-fits-all methods could, thus, be

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[3] In reference to Kuhn's (1970; 2000) notion of incommensurability, which he uses to describe notions that are created out of and exist within separate contexts, between which the portability of ideas and representations is limited. The comparison of these concepts, thus, necessitates varying degrees approximation. The notion is closely related to that of *generification* (Wilk, 1995), but I use the two terms differently here. I employ "generification" to mean the assumption of commensurability among things that are – at least to some degree – incommensurable.

employed to solve local development problems, regardless of the particularities of any given community. In the case of neolocalist development activism, however, the assumption is generally made that local needs, culture, meanings, and tools for solving problems are – to a large extent – *incommensurable* with those at the extralocal level, and often with those in other localities. Thus, local problems require local solutions and are often caused or exacerbated by non-local interference. Networked localism as employed in the collaborative endeavors of development monks, on the other hand, assumes a certain amount of commensurability, while simultaneously attempting to acknowledge that what is commensurable and incommensurable varies among contexts and local communities. This serves as the basis for the implementation of common strategies and practices within a multitude of varied contexts. Thus, as localized practices (for example a temple ICT center) become reified as portable concepts through collaborative practice (members have a common implicit understanding of the meaning of "temple ICT center" – in terms of its definition, the values it expresses, and the problems it is meant to solve), they are assumed to be commensurable. These practices – as well as strategies for successful implementation – can then be transplanted from one context to another. What is critical here is that conceptions of what is commensurable and the standards by which commensurability is judged is shared among members of the community of practice.

This process of reification and notions of commensurability are inextricably linked to identity as part of a community of practice, both implicitly and explicitly – implicitly as they comprise an assumed shared understanding and mutual construction of meaning and explicitly in that they define the terms of legitimate participation in monastic development practice. In doing so, they help to demarcate the range of potential configurations for monastic development activism and become an integral part in constructing the definition of "development monk" as an identity. In the following sections of this chapter, thus, I explore

the production and reproduction of development monks as a community of practice *in situ,* looking at various ways the process of collaboration works to produce reifications that simultaneously limit and enable, as well as homogenize and expand monastic development practice.

4.2 A network of networks: The Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization

In this section, I use the example of The Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (PDSNO) to illustrate one of the major mechanisms by which development monks have come to act as a community of practice. The creation of large-scale networks such as this one is central to the collaborative efforts of networked-localist development monks and to them securing funding and other forms of support for their practices. Furthermore, it is a process by which these monks (1) develop and share knowledge, strategies and skills, (2) negotiate shared meanings, norms, and understandings, (3) produce reifications of themselves and their practices, and (4) reproduce these norms, meanings, and practices by creating paths to legitimate peripheral participation. In the following section, I begin with an overview of the network, its background, and organizational structure. I then give an ethnographic account of a meeting of the network's central committee members in order to demonstrate the dialectic process by which the four processes mentioned above occur *in situ*.

4.2.1 Background and overview of the PDSNO

The Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (*Ongkan Khruakhai Sankha Phatthana Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong*, PDSNO) is the largest network of development monks working in northeast Thailand. The name of the

organization is derived from the concept of *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong* (PTPT) or "land of dhamma, land of gold," which has been part of the national development dialog in Thailand since the mid-1980s (although it took a much different form then than it does today). It was originally a state program, the inspiration for which was taken from a project called "*muban nai fun*" (Dream Village) employed by a district chief in Loei province in an attempt to raise the standards of living in his local community (Khongrudtigasagon, 1990). In 1984, a government committee was established to "spread the ideology of *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong*" (ibid, p. 21, translation mine). The tenants of this ideology stem from the idea that economic development (*phatthana sethakit*) must be accompanied by "spiritual development" (*phatthana chitchai*) and "social development" (*phatthana sangkhom*). According to the guidelines published by the Center for Promoting and Coordinating the Propagation of the PDTPDT Ideology[4] it was primarily focused on promoting adherence to Buddhist values at the village level, including curbing vice, such as gambling and drinking, and practicing economic thrift and "self-reliance." (Sun Songsoem Le Prasan Ganpoeipre Udomkan Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong, 1986). Villages that were deemed to have exhibited the values espoused by this ideology were given the *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong* village award. The major evaluation criterion used to judge the program's success was the number of villages that had been awarded this prize. This program led to various state-led village and district-level educational campaigns and projects in which GOs and Sangha authorities strongly encouraged local monks to participate.[5]

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[4] My translation. The committee's official name in Thai is *Sun Songsoem Le Prasan Ganpoeipre Udomkan Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong*

[5] Lapthananon (2012b) argues that because the program failed to provide direct support to the villagers, it "essentially it did not produce positive development impacts in most areas" (p. 252) and most of its monastic supporters ended up quitting development activism or moving on to other projects.

4. A Community of Monastic Development Practice

In 1987, Phra Siriphatthanaphon in Ubon Ratchathani province formed a development monk organization called the Organization of *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong* Leader Monks (*Ong Phra Phunam Phaendin Tham Phaendin thong*, hereafter referred to as OPP) with Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat from nearby Amnat Charoen province acting as assistant. This small network of area development monks was created as a way for monks in the area to gather resources and share strategies for the implementation of PDTPDT ideology. They focused on educating villagers, including vocational training, morality seminars, and anti-alcohol/drug campaigns. These activities were widely regarded as being successful and inspired the formation of similar groups around the region (Bamphen, 2006; Oupakutto, 2013).

In 2012, leader groups from around the Isan area collaborated to form the Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (PDSNO), a network of local development monk groups from each province in northeast Thailand. As one representative monk from Ubon Ratchathani province explained it to me at a 2013 meeting,

> Monks in each province [in the northeast] came together to create this network. This is a network made up of other [smaller] networks from each province [in Isan]...These provincial organizations have members who have collaborated in order to become development monks...My group is in Ubon and [in addition to the projects implemented by the Ubon group] each of the monks in the Ubon network has his own kinds of projects (personal communication, August 17, 2013).

The idea for the PDSNO was presented during a meeting on October 11-13 2012, at the suggestion of the academic mentioned in the introduction and previous section, Dr. Pinit Lapthananon. Dr. Lapthananon, who had already been highly engaged with development

monks around the northeast convinced the monks with whom he had been working that creating a meta-network of existing local networks would allow them to share ideas and resources to a much greater extent. The organization was officially formed the following month. According to the network's charter, its purpose is

> to amass membership from development monks who are working in all 20 districts in the northeast or *Isan* area, in order to form a network that helps and supports the activities of the development sangha in the hopes that it will be the starting point in finding a path to creating disciples (*tayad*)[6] for the development sangha through a development sangha network (translation mine).

The PDSNO's stated goals are (1) to conduct research on and create a database of development monks in the *Isan* area, including project backgrounds, their ideological underpinnings, the application of the dhamma to development work, and the successful and problematic aspects of their execution, (2) to strengthen collaborative work among members from all provinces around the region, (3) to be a mediator that supports collaborative work among development monks, the Sangha, social development networks, the public sector, and government organizations, and (4) to direct the creation of disciples of the development sangha based on collaboration with the *phutthaborisat si* (see below) to continue the work of development monks in the future in a way that conforms to modern societal conditions and expertise.

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[6] The word, *tayad* is typically translated as "heir" and is often used in the context of collaborative meetings to refer to (typically) younger monks whom currently practicing development monks attempt to recruit in the hopes that they would carry on the monastic development practices initiated by their predecessors. Given that this often takes the form of training alongside practicing development monks, as well as the religious context in which it occurs, I decided that "disciple" is the translation that most thoroughly conveys the implications of the word here.

In meetings and in their distributed materials, the group urges its members to engage in development work as "participatory action research"[7] in each of their respective provinces with both other monks and lay actors in order to further expand and strengthen the network. Members of the network with whom I spoke often emphasized the importance of monks engaging in development work in collaboration with the laity. They would frequently refer to the engagement of the entire *phutthaborisat si* (the four Buddhist communities), which includes *bhikkhu* (monks), *bhikkhuni* (nuns)[8], *upasaka* (pious laymen), *upasika* (pious laywomen) as being crucial to the success of development projects, as opposed to projects being carried out solely by monks. At the network level, this lay-collaboration usually takes the form of volunteers, academics, state officials, and government organizations. In the meetings in which I took part, there were always at least two or three lay academics and administrators in attendance, helping to devise strategies and coordinate projects. In addition, government organizations, in particular the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF) and the Stop Drink Network (SDN), always played a major role in the proceedings, to the point where their logos adorned all of the promotional materials. After 2014, this became even more pronounced when the PDSNO came to be under the recently-formed nation-wide development-monk foundation, the Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development, (*Munithi Sankha Phuea Sangkhom*, DDD – discussed in Section 4.3). This foundation is an umbrella organization that promotes and funds the work of development monks from around the country. Unlike the northeast division of the foundation, Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors (also discussed later in this chapter) which is the network consisting of monks who represent the DDD foundation, the PDSNO functions as an autonomous organization, with all decisions

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[7] At organization meetings and in their printed materials, they often refer to this methodology using the Thai term (*wichai choeng patibatigan bep mi suan ruam*) followed by the English.

[8] During the course of my fieldwork, however, I never saw nor heard of any examples of *bhikkhuni* participation in the network's activities

being made at the regional (*Isan*) level. According to the monks involved, the reason for the PDSNO joining the foundation was to procure greater funding from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF), which is now the network's primary source of material support. In the next chapter, I highlight the potentially problematic aspects of this kind of increased participation and devotion of resources to monastic development projects by government organizations, arguing that it has led to an emphasis on and proliferation of *certain kinds* of monastic development projects (specifically those that support a nationalist narrative) at the expense of others.

The structure of the PDSNO is also a departure from those underlying the practices of development monks of decades past (who primarily worked alone or as part of small informal collaborative endeavors) in that it has all of the organizational trappings of a typical NGO or similar institution. In addition to the representative monks from each province, there is a formal committee of six development monks, elected by the members, who handle the administrative duties of the network. The chairman (currently Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat from *Wat* Thep Mongkhon in Amnat Charoen province) is in charge of management of the organization and the organization committee. He is also the network's representative when interacting with outside actors and organizations and is leads all committee and network meetings. The vice-chair (currently Phrakhru Amonchaikhun from *Wat* Asonthammatayad in Nakhon Ratchasima province) acts as assistant to the chairman and assumes his duties when he is not available. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun is the secretary, who oversees the administrative duties of the organization, including arranging and recording the organization's meetings and activities. The monk in charge of public relations (currently Phrakhru Silaworaphon from *Wat* Nonmuang in Nakhon Ratchasima province) is tasked with disseminating information about the activities of the network and its members, both to the general public and to the members themselves. In

addition there is a treasurer in charge of the groups finances and a registrar who handles the member database (see appendix C).

Figure 4.2 - the Phaendin Dhamma Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (PDSNO) logo

The PDSNO's logo consists of two candles, representing the dhamma and Vinaya,[9] bent together to end in a single flame. The candles form a shape that is meant to simultaneously invoke that of the golden Buddha image, two hands with palms pressed together in obeisance, and a lotus flower. In front of the two candles is an image of a dharma wheel with 20 spokes, representing the 20 provinces in the *Isan* region. Below this image "*Oppamaten Sompatet*"[10] is written in Pali script. Symbolic representations of the network, such as this logo, the group charter (which was distributed during a meeting I attended), and the organization's Facebook page (figure 4.3), are all examples of ways in which the monastic development activism is reified and presented to members of the group and to the general population. They help codify

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[9] Rules to be obeyed by the Sangha or monastic community.

[10] The final words attributed to the Buddha before his attaining enlightenment, in which he states that all things are changeable and urges his disciples to continue to diligently strive.

what have historically been informal and loosely connected practices, representing them as a single formalized entity with a clearly-defined perimeter. They are the artefacts of a process of self-definition, in which members of this community negotiate the norms, values, and practices that characterize legitimate participation.

Figure 4.3 - The PDSNO's Facebook page[11]

This active creation of and participation in these kinds of extralocal networks is emblematic of the networked-localist approach to development activism. A critical feature of this network that makes it especially representative of networked-localist ideology is that it is intended to be made up, not merely of individual development monks, but of groups working in their own local communities. It is an attempt to create what would in essence be an *extralocal network of localities.* As I briefly mentioned in the second chapter, this idea is key to the development strategies of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and other development monks who have adopted similar approaches. It is an attempt to simultaneously access extralocal knowledge and resources while preserving the relevance, authority, and identity of local communities. At the same time, it can also lead to a degree of generification (Wilk, 1995) of localities and local forms of activism through their reification as members (each monk is representative of the

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[11]https://www.facebook.com/องค์การเครือข่ายสังฆพัฒนาแผ่นดินธรรมแผ่นดินทอง-1716195161938121/

particularities of his locality) in this meta-network. This is because this kind of networked approach requires particular practices, approaches, and communities to be understood as *commensurable* to some extent. It assumes some interchangeability among local problems and practices as strategies are discussed and shared and collaborative multi-local plans are implemented. Furthermore, the high priority placed on recruiting disciples to "become development monks" further underscores the network's role in the formation of development monks as a *community of practice*. It is a formal way in which potential development monks can engage in situated learning through legitimate peripheral participation, simultaneously acquiring skills and knowledge and developing the shared norms, symbols, and meanings of the community. In the next section, I give a detailed account of a PDSNO meeting I attended in late 2014 in an attempt to better understand the specific sites and scenes in which these kinds of meanings are negotiated and reifications are produced.

4.2.2   A PDSNO meeting in Amnat Charoen province

Here, I give an account of one of several PDSNO meetings I attended over the course of my fieldwork. The meeting took place on November 15, 2014 and was held at *Wat* Thep Mongkhon in Amnat Charoen province. The purpose of this account is to illustrate the real-world context in which practical roles and shared ideological frameworks are constructed and negotiated. I chose to examine this particular meeting, as it was one in which the inner workings of the network were on display in a way that was especially clear. It was the first meeting after the death of the previous chairman, Phra Siriphathanaphon and marked a reorganization and further formalization of the network's organizational structure, goals, and activities. The network was also in the process of submitting an application to become part of The DDD (Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development, mentioned in the previous section) in

order to receive a significant amount of funding from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF). This necessitated submission of a group charter and project plan, detailing the network's philosophy, goals, and organizational structure (all of which had been mostly tacit or only semi-formal until that point). Although the charter and project plan, entitled "The Development Sangha and Creation Development Monk Disciples In *Isan* Project" (*Khrongkan Khruakhai Sangkha Phatthana Le Kan Sang Tayad Phra Nak Phatthana Nai Phak Isan*), had been drafted prior to the meeting by Dr. Lapthananon (the academic described in the introduction and the first section of this chapter) and the network's administrative committee (including Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun), it was being presented to the rest of the committee members for the first time for clarification and potential revision. Thus, in addition to deciding on a new chairman, the group was also engaging in a formal process of self-definition, with members negotiating the terms by which they would understand and present their collective ideology and practice.

Figure 4.4 - The committee in attendance at the November 2014 PDSNO regional meeting

The meeting took place in the temple's central meeting hall and was attended by around 23 monks and 5 lay volunteers, including some from Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's own village.

Having arrived the previous evening, I spent the morning assisting some of the younger monks in setting up the meeting hall prior to the arrival of the majority of the members. Long collapsible tables draped with white and orange cloth and covered plastic chairs were arranged in a "U" shape around a large projector screen. Beside the screen and facing the reset of the tables was a smaller table with two ornate wooden chairs. This was reserved for Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat, the abbot at *Wat* Thep Mongkhon and interim PDSNO chairman. Surrounding the main tables was seating for lower-ranked monks, laypeople, and those not directly involved in the committee. During the meeting, I was invited to sit at a small table toward the front of the room just behind the area at which the main committee was seated. In the back of the room toward the entrance was a registration table, which was manned by a younger monk and Lung Noi, former village headman of Ban Pho Noi and the most active of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's lay volunteers.

Figure 4.5 - The meeting hall [left] and registration table [right] prior to the start of the meeting

When the monks registered, they were given draft copies of the group charter and program plan mentioned above, as well as two paperback books with the titles, "Health/well-being of monks in the year 2012" (*Sukhaphawa Khong Phrasong Pi 2555*) and "Internet Conduct Befitting of Monks" (*Phruetikam Kan Chai Intoenet Ti Mosom Khong Phrasong*), the

former written by Pinit Lapthananon and the latter by Pinit Lapthananon and Thaenphan Senaphan Buamai. Both books were published by the THPF. The book on monks' health was the result of a 2011-2012 study funded by the THPF and conducted by Dr. Lapthananon regarding the physical and mental health of monks around the country and ways in which it could be improved. The second book is a technical and behavioral guide to internet use, with the purpose of both enabling and encouraging greater monastic involvement in online activity, as well as presenting guidelines for its proper use. The chapter on Facebook ("Using Facebook for Monks" [translation mine]), for example, explains both how to use the site's various posting and messaging features and appropriate and inappropriate behavior for monks using the site (e.g., language formality and proper posting frequency and content). There are also chapters on topics such as creating a temple website and the monks' roles online (including teaching the *dhamma* and promoting community development) and the explanations are peppered with concrete examples of how monks are currently using the internet in the ways described. This book is one example of monastic development practice being reified as an artefact that, in turn, serves as both a template and a promotional tool for future engagement in that practice. Although the book does not focus exclusively on development monks, it does place emphasis on ways in which the internet can be used to promote and support community development work. Furthermore, its distribution at a meeting of "development monk leaders" underscores its role in reproducing specific types of engagement in development activism.
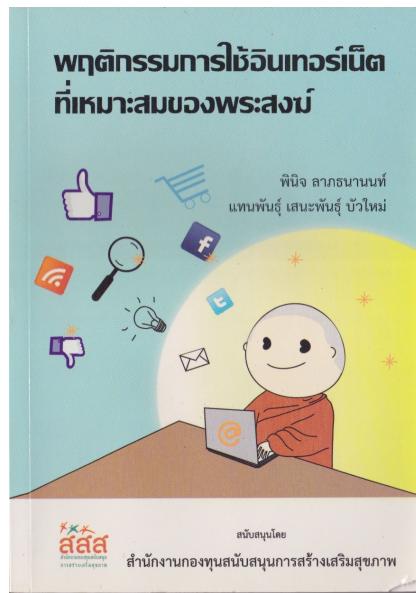
Figure 4.6 - The cover of "Internet Conduct Befitting of Monks"

As the monks began to arrive and sign in, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun played videos on the projector screen profiling various development monks from around the region, including interviews and overviews of their various practices. This was a common feature at all of the meetings and events that I attended with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, and demonstrates his enthusiasm for promotion of development monks' activities (I explore these video profiles further in the next section). One of the younger monks set up a video camera on a tripod facing the meeting tables. This was another practice that was common to all of the development monk meetings I attended, regardless of the particular group. At every meeting there was video, photographic and audio recording taking place throughout the event (at all of the events in which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was involved there was always at least one lower-ranking monk roaming the site constantly taking photographs). In addition, after any event Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun would often ask for copies of any audio recordings I had made or photographs I had taken (he frequently gave me one of his cameras to use with instructions to take as many photos as possible). These kinds of records serve both as tools to help development monks

develop their skills and strategies and as promotional material for their endeavors. As one monk in attendance at a previous PDSNO meeting told me:

> [We make these recordings] in order that we can go back and continue to study what we have talked about for future reference. We also record so that other people can do [the things we talk about]... We can look at these later and ask: is there anything we need to supplement? Is there anything lacking? (personal communication, August 17, 2013).

Another monk attending the meeting told me that these records/recorded documents also function as a kind of evidence. Photographs and video recordings are often shared on the group's and individual monks' social media pages/channels, acting as means for promoting their activities to both the laity and other monks in the hopes that they will engage in these or other similar projects. They, thus, serve as concrete representations of meetings and events and also a means for the refinement and reproduction of the procedures and practices that are on display.

The meeting began at 8:30 am once most of the seats had been filled. As the participants were filing in, a lay representative from the THPF explained the two books that were distributed and the purpose of the meeting. He emphasized importance of monks coming together to improve monastic development practice by learning from each other's experience, encouraging the monks in attendance to conduct research into the kinds of activities being conducted in their respective areas and "to gather this as data in order to join together to think, work, solve problems, and develop." Following this, the interim chairman, Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat, led an invocation and gave his opening remarks. He noted that there had not been a meeting

since the death of the previous chairman early that year and emphasized the need to continue pushing forward, despite any setbacks. He made particular mention of the effort put forth by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and Dr. Lapthananon, who had been regularly making the long journey (Dr. Lapthananon lives in Bangkok) to meet with him one-on-one about procuring funding and coordinating future network activities. He explained that Dr. Lapthananon was supposed to speak during the morning session but at the last minute was not be unable to attend.

In his place, a Ministry of Energy (MOE) official spoke about a temple and village energy conservation the MOE was currently promoting. He gave a PowerPoint presentation containing charts on average energy consumption and ways in which it could be reduced (switching to energy efficient light bulbs, etc.). Following this, the participants were asked to make their way outside, where an interactive display, entitled "Energy Mobile Unit,"[12] had been constructed. Under a series of awnings were various implements, such as roof ventilators and burner guards for gas ranges, meant to reduce the energy consumption in everyday village activities. MOE representatives staged demonstrations of these devices, inviting the monks in attendance to ask questions and to try using the equipment themselves. There were also displays in which working light bulbs and solar panels were connected to electricity gauges so that participants could compare the various energy production/consumption levels of these devices. It bears mentioning that most of the objects on display were equipment that the monks, themselves, would not use. For example, much of the display area was dedicated to implements used in cooking and food preparation, activities in which monks are prohibited to engage. The expectation was that the monks in attendance would relay the information to the villagers in their respective communities. As Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat put it, "it is easier to speak to the monks and have us speak to the villagers than for [the government representatives] to speak

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[12] This English name was written parenthetically below the Thai *Nuai Patibatgan Phalanggnan Khluan Ti.*

to the villagers directly." Once again, this highlights networked-localist development monks' roles as mediators between the local villagers and extralocal entities. In this case, the existence of a network heightens this role, essentially creating a single hub through with multiple villages that have active development monks can be accessed. Furthermore, meetings such as these provide a physical space in which this kind of direct access to the development monk community is able to take place.

Figure 4.7 - Demonstrations using the "Energy Mobile Unit"

Following a lunch break (monks are required to eat separately from the laity), the members reconvened in order to elect the new chairman and discuss the group's organizational structure and plans moving forward. Below, I give a detailed account of the discussion that took place during that session in order to demonstrate the ways in which decisions are reached, strategies are developed, and meanings are negotiated in this context.

Figure 4.8 - The afternoon session of the November 2014 PDSNO meeting

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, who was the moderator at the meeting, begins by addressing the attendees, noting the participation of several new members from another development monk network, Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors (discussed in the next section). He apologies for not having prepared a PowerPoint presentation, but assures the members that in the future he will "take what we discuss here and make it into an article or something to that effect." Instead, he pulls up the group's newly-created Facebook page and explains that, in addition to this, he has created a chat group for members to engage in group discussion online. He uses this to segue into a discussion of monastic use of technology, encouraging the monks in attendance to be active on social media. He draws their attention to notebooks being distributed that contain printouts of Buddhist teachings on picture backgrounds. He says there is a monk who creates these and posts them on Facebook with explanations of their meaning.

It's called *Dhamma* Facebook ... and it has many characteristics that are similar to development work, in terms of the thinking behind it and its presentation ... When we do this kind of work we need to use the tools that are available... You may have

heard about Buddhadasa referring to technology as techno-*lole*.[13] Back then it was

like that. It made you do less. But now it has become an opportunity for us to do

good.

He then briefly explains that they are to vote on a new chairman and opens the floor to members

to express their opinions about who to elect and how to go about conducting the vote. A question

is raised as to whether development monks that were not part of the network could be nominated,

to which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun responds that this has led to problems in the past. He details

a previous meeting, in which Luang Pho Nan[14] was nominated but the other committee

members did not want to elect someone without him knowing, so decided to only nominate

those who were present.

The members begin the discussion and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's assistant, Lung Noi,

moves among the participants delivering the microphone to those who signal that they intend

to speak. Each monk who speaks addresses multiple issues, mostly revolving around the

group's organizational structure, the focus of future projects, and the election of a new chairman

(all recommended choosing someone who was present). In addition, almost all of the monks

refer to their own experiences, describing their present and previous projects and how those

experiences could be applied in the context of the network. The first monk to weigh in refers to

his experience working with a monk in Nakhon Ratchasima on an education project who had

been having problems implementing his plans until he developed a more formal organizational

structure. He then argues that this network requires a greater amount of formalization and needs

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[13] *lole* means to waver or to be fickle

[14] Luang Pho Nan is considered one of the first development monks in the *Isan* area, having begun engaging in this kind of activism in 1963. However, when I interviewed him in 2013, he had not been active for a number of years due to ailing health.

to work in a more systematic way, ensuring that all of the monks in the sub-networks are being productive:

> Some of the temples are doing very stable work. They are doing more than a hundred percent. Each of the monks there use the same techniques for communicating, the same techniques for involving the community, the same techniques for interacting with leaders. However there is another group [who do not produce results]... they just take the budget and show up at meetings ... I want to see our work progress to a greater extent in way that is more concrete than it is now.

He goes on to express that the king may not have much longer to live and that they should have something to show him before he dies. He suggests PDSNO find 20 monks (one from each province) in high positions and have them instruct designated monks from each district. These monks would then implement the development projects on the ground.

The second monk to speak suggests that instead of voting "like parliament" for a new chairman, they should just discuss it amongst themselves, as they can all refer to the wisdom of Buddhist teachings in order to reach an agreement. He also emphasizes the importance of making recordings of their work, suggesting that each monk report to the network and that the network produce books, documents, CDs, or DVDs so that other monks and academics who want to do development work can refer to them.

> That way if a monk, for example, reads this book [that he suggests producing] – this Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong book – then he'll get ideas straight away and

continue [our work]. This is one way to foster sustainability in our practice: creating evidence.

Following this, a monk from Roi Et province speaks up, suggesting that the network reach out to the higher-ups in the Sangha, in order to secure the wider cooperation that would come with official institutional support. He emphasizes the importance of outside collaboration in creating disciples, suggesting that someone like Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, who is skilled at connecting with various monastic and lay institutions for support, be the new chairman.

> Then we can figure out how to make networks in each of the provinces. Especially with educational institutions. This will expedite the expansion [of the network] considerably. Working with educational institutions, working with the TOA[15]... It is like making waves. [Once a wave is created,] other waves will continue to follow. And we will get both [connections] and personnel.

One member then refers to his experience working as the head of a development monk group in Ubon Ratchathani and suggests that the network be more focused in the range of activities in which it chooses to engage.

> The wider our focus the more difficult it will be. For example connecting with each other – the wider the distance the more difficult it is for us to visit each other. If we work more narrowly, it will become clearer when we come together and talk. Let

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[15] The Tambon Administration Organization, a government agency responsible for subdistrict-level administration

this be a stage where we can come together and share our experiences. And the thing that is really important is creating disciples, but it is extremely difficult.

He goes on to relate the difficulties he has experienced with disciples, saying that after expending the time and energy to train them, they often do not have the fortitude to continue with the projects long term.

Phrakhru Phiphathana Phibun from Nong Bua Lamphu province suggests a more formalized approach, both to group organization and project implementation. He recommends electing twenty vice chairs (*rong prathan*) – one from each province – who will, in turn, elect their own vice chairs to represent each district in their province, creating three levels of committees. He contends that this kind of concrete structure will strengthen the network. The focus of the development work would then be negotiated by the top-level committee, who would chose a theme for local development projects annually.

> For example, we choose the kind of work we want to do for 2015, doing whatever
>
> the Sangha or the national government [wants to emphasize]. So this year they want
>
> the population to obey *Sila Ha.*[16] Then we figure out how we can make the theme
>
> of *Sila Ha* into a concrete plan. [He gives the example of a project in which he has
>
> been involved to get villagers to sign onto the *Muban Raksa Sin Ha* program] ...
>
> And when [the villagers] practice *Sin Ha* they also practice Sufficiency Economy ...
>
> and this will create *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong.*

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[16] The five Buddhist precepts to be obeyed by the laity. Specifically he is referring to the *Muban Raksa Sin Ha* (villages that obey the five Buddhist precepts) program instituted under the NCPO in 2014. I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun suggests they table this discussion for now and work out these details at a later date. He recommends the current interim chairman, Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat, be made the official chairman of the network and asks for a show of hands from those who agree, making a joke about it being time to elect the "prime minister." All of the participants raise their right hands.[17] He, then, shifts the discussion to the project plan that will be submitted in order to apply for funding from the THPF. He suggests using this project as the basis for training sessions for potential disciples and reiterates the need for this to happen through a representative structure, in which these sessions are arranged by the prefectural leaders at the prefectural and community level.

> This way we will be able to get *real* development monks. Up until now we have
> had individual monks applying [directly to the regional committee] and we have
> had no idea if they were actually doing development work. We have had no way of
> following up ... We should move [implementation] to the provincial level, then have
> the development monks with the most skill and knowledge there transmit their
> knowledge. Then if anyone is interested [in working with development monks] –
> for example, schools, the Sangha, community leaders, the TOA, or various
> localities – they will be able to contact those monk groups who will impart their
> knowledge and offer their services.

A more rapid informal discussion follows, with members engaged in more of a conversation than the presentation-style format of the interaction detailed above. One of the topics on the table is the title of the project plan and the name of the network itself, with some of the monks suggesting omitting the word "monk" from the project plan and "Sangha" from the organization

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[17] Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun also jokingly calls out to me to raise my hand, as well.

name, as it should include the laity, as well. In the end, however, they decide to keep the original group name and only alter the title of the project plan by adding "in *Isan*" (*Nai Phak Isan*) to the end. Much of the discussion is focused on ways in which their work can be presented. As reflected in the comments above, the consensus centers around representatives from each province forming subcommittees to gather data about development practices from their respective areas and report them to the regional committee, which will, in turn, work to put together a comprehensive record of monastic development activism in the *Isan* region. There is also discussion of the importance of including educational institutions, and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun points to my presence at the meeting as a result of their development work being significant enough to attract international researchers. They then talk about possibly using the project plan as a basis for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with monastic universities and creating a master's curriculum on monastic community development. In the interest of time, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun cuts the discussion short and moves that they choose four representatives, one from each of the Sangha's administrative regions[18] in the northeast, who will then be in charge of choosing the provincial representatives from their region. Selecting the regional representatives is an informal affair, with Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun reverting to *Isan* dialect,[19] asking individual monks from each region if they were interested and jotting down the names of those who accepted. This final matter took less than five minutes to complete, and after the closing invocation, the meeting was adjourned.

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[18] The Thai Sangha is divided into 18 administrative regions (under which it is further divided by province, district, and sub-district). The northeast consists of four Sangha regions (regions 8-11), as follows: Region 8: Udon Thani, Nong Khai, Loei, Sakon Nakhon, Nongbua Lamphu; Region 9: Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, Roi Et; Region 10: Ubon Ratchathani, Sisaket, Nakhon Phanom, Yasothon, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen; Region 11: Nakhon Ratchasima, Buriram, Chaiyaphum, Surin.

[19] The language used during development-monk meetings and other gatherings was highly dependent on context. When giving presentations or expressing opinions as part of the official discussion, the monks would use central Thai, but when speaking one-on-one or in small groups, *Isan* tended to be the language of choice.

4. A Community of Monastic Development Practice

The above account of this meeting highlights some of the ways in which development monks' practices are formalized, reified, and reproduced in a community setting. Meanings and representations of development monks and monastic community development are created through discursive negotiation among representative actors who understand themselves to be at the core of this community of practice. Through this negotiation they create shared meanings and understandings of the practice, develop their knowledge and skills, and structure the ways by which newcomers are able to begin to participate and how that participation is legitimated. In addition to the determination of the group's explicit organizational structure described above, this occurs by way of three primary mechanisms: (1) members sharing and comparing their own experiences, bringing them to bear on those in other localities and on the practices of the group as a whole, (2) the explicit attempt to create disciples, monks to engage at the periphery as they learn the skills, meanings, and norms that define the core of the community, and (3) through the creation of artefacts, concrete objects (I include digital objects, such as video and document files, in this category) that represent development monks and their practices.

Practices being implemented in various localities are shared as monks refer to their own experiences and relate them to the problems being discussed, bringing to bear their perceived successes and failures and attempting to apply them in this higher-level context. We see the top-down bottom-up process of networked localism at work, as strategies that have been developed at the local level are proposed for selective transplantation and re-implementation in other local communities. Despite the fact that the individual activities to which the monks referred covered a diverse range of practices there is a degree of assumed commensurability among them, as they are all understood as examples of the same categorical concept (monastic development practice). As a result, the monks attempt find similar strategies for their successful implementation. Furthermore, when these kinds of experiences are shared and their meanings

are discussed, the meeting acts as a stage in which the tools of monastic development as a practice, as well as the skills of the practitioners, are honed in a communal environment. This is also an act of definition, in which the range of possible configurations of monastic development practice are on display and subject to evaluation and negotiation.

This process of definition or bounding of the practice is especially clear in the monks' attempts to "create disciples" (*sang tayad*). As the account of the meeting above makes clear, this is one of the major issues with which the network is attempting to contend.[20] This is a recent feature of monastic development practice. As I have mentioned, in previous decades, the term "development monk" tended to be a term applied *ex post facto* to monks engaged in various kinds of development activism at the local level. However, here is an example of these practitioners, not only applying it to themselves, but also actively recruiting others to participate in that definition. In addition, the monks discuss wanting to create "real development monks" and lament disciples whom they do not consider to be participating in development practice. It is, thus, clear that they are also engaged in evaluating the legitimacy of potential[21] peripheral participation, deciding what does and does not count as a "development monk." By the same token, it also provides a clear blueprint for entry into the community of practice that has evolved around monastic development activism. It is, thus, a process that both defines legitimate peripheral participation and creates a formal mechanism through which it can be achieved.

Finally, this meeting highlights the emphasis placed on the creation artefacts in order to represent development monks' practices, as well as the process by which these artefacts are

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[20] This was still a central theme and occupied most of the discussion at the most recent PDSNO meeting in May 2016 at *Wat* Phothikaram.

[21] I refer to *potential* peripheral participation here because, as I mention in section 4.1, legitimacy, peripherality, and participation in a community of practice are all interdependent. Thus, in order to be considered peripheral participation, it must also be legitimate.

produced. In addition, it demonstrates the various meanings that these reifications embody. First, they are concrete evidence of monastic development activism and the results thereof – tangible objects that are both produced by and represent these practices. Secondly, they serve as means for mobilizing support for these and future projects. The books, videos, and other archival and promotional materials produced and distributed by the group allow potential collaborators and sources of funding to discover and better understand the work of development monks. Most importantly, however, these artefacts act as models for future development practice.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The account of the PDSNO (Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization) in this section demonstrates the process by which "development monks" as community of practice is formed and organized, and by which reifications of it are created. Importantly, it also highlights the mutually-constructed relationship between outside support and this kind of formalization/reification. As is clear from the description in this section, a major driving force in the creation of an official organizational structure and the explicit articulation of policies and goals is the attempt to procure funding and other forms of support from outside (mainly government) institutions. Furthermore, the kinds of organizations from which they are seeking support and the projects in which those organizations are involved have a profound influence on the ways in which the development monks present themselves and their practices, as well as the practices in which they choose to engage. This influence works in the opposite direction, as well. Government agencies, which are frequently working under directives to implement concrete policies according to vague ideological guidelines such as *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong* and Sufficiency Economy, often look to development monks

for resources, ideas, and legitimization. In Chapter 3 (see pp. 122-23, 139), for example, I described how the Cultural Center and Digital Center in *Wat* Phothikaram were able to obtain government funding because they were models (that conformed to state ideology/policy) that were already being implemented on the ground. This is because (1) most of the groundwork has already been laid and the initial investment of material resources necessary is, thus, significantly lower, (2) these projects present concrete examples of the implementation of the ideological development guidelines promoted by the state and (3) due to them being led by village monks, they are seen as legitimate localist endeavors. The formation of large-scale development-monk networks streamlines this process by creating highly-visible, centralized access points for institutions looking to engage in these kinds of projects. Fundamental to this process is the reification of development monks and their practices – as artefacts and accounts, and as a categories of classification. Development monks' practices are made portable through this process of reification, able to be transplanted to other contexts and implemented by other practitioners. They also provide ready-made examples of projects for potential development monks. In this sense, they work to both reproduce the practices they represent and to define the range and types of practices that become associated with monastic development activism. In the next section I examine this process of reification and self-representation in more detail, using the example of a similar network, Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors.

4.3   Collaborative exhibition: Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors

While in the previous section I focused on showing how meanings are negotiated and reifications of monastic development practice are created among practitioners, in this section, I attempt to show how those meanings and reifications are interacted with and put to use. In

order to do so, I examine the national development monk network, *Phra Nak Phatthana Phuea Sangkhom Khuap Khum Badchai Siang* (Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors), and the development monk foundation they represent, as well as give an account of a development monk exhibition/recruitment event held in Khon Kaen province in 2015.

4.3.1 Background and overview of the network and program

The group, *Phra Nak Phatthana Phuea Sangkhom Khuap Khum Badchai Siang* (Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors, referred to here as "Development Monks for Society" for the sake of simplicity) is a network similar to the PDSNO, which I described in the previous section. However, while the PDSNO works exclusively in the northeast, Development Monks for Society is a nation-wide organization consisting of representative monks from 32 temples across the country. Like the PDSNO, Development Monks for Society's funding comes from the Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development[22] (*Munithi Sangkha Phuea Sangkhom*, DDD), the difference being that, while the PDSNO merely falls under the DDD Foundation's umbrella of support, "Development Monks for Society" is the name given to the group of practicing development monks responsible for the administration of the foundation, as well as the planning and implementation of its various projects. In other words, Development Monks for Society refers to the monks who act directly on behalf of the foundation, whereas the PDSNO is an autonomous regional network that is supported by DDD. Despite there being slight differences in the duties performed by the foundation and those performed by Development Monks for Society, the top levels of both groups consist of the same member monks and top-level committee. Development Monks for Society meetings also function as DDD meetings.

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[22] The literal translation of the foundation's Thai name is "The Sangha for Society Foundation." However a document from an early meeting of the northeast regional wing of the network I attended had the above English translation along with the abbreviation in the letterhead. Although I have not found any other materials that contain an English translation of the foundation's name, I will treat that as the official translation.

Furthermore, the monks with whom I spoke tended to refer to the two groups interchangeably and many, including Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, told me that they were essentially the same. As this section is meant to focus on the background, goals, and activities of the organization and not the administrative minutia, I will refer the DDD foundation and Development Monks for Society as more-or-less a singular entity for the sake of simplicity and to alleviate confusion.

Figure 4.9 - The Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development's logo

The Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development, based in *Wat* Pho Thong in Chanthaburi province, began as a national network of monks called Sangha for Society (*Sangkha Phuea Sangkhom*), which focused on connecting monks and laypeople/institutions throughout the country in order to organize programs to educate the laity about Buddhist teachings and their application in daily life. Many of those involved in the organization were development monks engaged in various other projects in their own communities, and the group subsequently expanded its focus to monks working on community development projects other than Buddhist education, as well. The network found that a major problem facing many

development monks was that they were not receiving enough funding to support their respective projects long term. Thus, in 2014 the Sangha for Society became The Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development, the primary aim of which was to generate and allocate funding to member development monks and networks and alleviate budgetary concerns in the implementation of their various projects. The monks involved felt it was important that development monks find a way to band together and support each other's work in a way that would reduce the need for individual monks to rely on temple funds or direct connections with outside organizations. The foundation, itself, receives support primarily from three GNGOs (government NGOs): The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF), The Stop Drink Network (SDN), and *Samnakgnan Khrueakhai Prachakhom Sangsoem Sukhapawa* (the community network for the promotion of health/well-being). It, thus, tends to focus primarily on monks/organizations that are involved in projects that tackle health/vice (*abayamuk,* "immoral" behavior, including gambling, drinking, etc.)-related issues.

The Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development / Development Monks for Society is divided into four subnetworks by region. Each region has one representative and these monks meet regularly in Chanthaburi province as part of the national committee (north = Phra Sathit Thiraponno of Lampang province, central = Phrakhru Suwan Phothiworatham of Chanthaburi province [the central location of the foundation/network], northeast/*Isan* = Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, and South = Phrakhru Palad Khuanphon Thitikhuno of Satun province). In addition to the four regional representatives, there are also seven other monks on the committee, as well as a fluctuating number of representatives from lay support organizations (for example, the Thai Health Promotional Foundation, from which the

foundation receives most of its financial support).[23] Each region is provided a budget for a given project, which is subsequently allocated within the region by its representative. The intention is for these 32 member temples to serve as models (*wat tonbep*) for other temples in the region to engage in similar activities. Although the focus of most of the network's development activities tends to be in the realm of health/vice, one of its main overarching goals is to encourage monks to engage in community-oriented activism – to become development monks.

Figure 4.10 - A recent meeting of the Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development national committee[24]

The funding that the foundation supplies is not limited to direct assistance with development work, however. One program the group implemented, for example, called The

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[23] See Appendix D for a map of the network's organizational structure.

[24] Although I was present for many of northeast regional meetings, I was unable to attend any of the national meetings during my time in the field. This photograph was taken from the group's Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/spiritualnetwork

Sangkha for Society Health Merit Fund (*Gong Bun Sukhaphawa Sangkha Phuea Sangkhom*) provides a kind of insurance to assist development monks and their lay contributors afford medical treatment or other basic health-related necessities in the case of sickness or injury. Members pay 2,000 baht (about $60 USD) upon joining the program and a subsequent 1,000 baht every year thereafter and are then eligible to receive limited compensation for any medical expenses they incur. The requirements for monks to become members are that they (1) must be development monks who are regularly involved in a network/networks and whose projects have a "clear format," (2) must be well-versed in funding and budgetary matters, and (3) must be recommended by their district subnetwork. Regarding the third requirement, I had the opportunity to attend a regional-level meeting for the northeast, which took place at *Wat* Phothikaram (Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple) in which monks were applying to become members. Prospective members each stood up in turn and spent about 15 minutes presenting on their past and current development activities. Following this, the monks who make up the regional-level committee made a decision as to whom they would recommend based on these presentations.

There are two ways in which this program particularly illustrates the formalization of monastic development activism. First, it functions as a kind of "development monk health insurance," inviting the comparison of development monks being akin to employees working for a formal organization or – even more apt – guild members, paying dues and receiving benefits based on their affiliation with a specific trade. Secondly, it enumerates guidelines by which membership is to be defined, and individual practitioners are subsequently judged as to whether or not their practices make them eligible for inclusion. The public forums at which monks present their activities before regional committee members are held to essentially decide

whether or not potential members count as development monks within the context of this program. This kind of formalization is one way by which development monks have become a *community of practice*, although it is important to note that a community of practice is not defined by the existence of a formal organizational structure. It is made up of actors who engage in a particular practice working together to improve their knowledge and skills in that realm, while creating reifications (which often take the form of objects, such as the DVDs mentioned earlier) and shared understandings that both represent the practice itself and define the range of configurations that count as legitimate peripheral participation, (as described by Lave and Wenger, 1991) in it. It is clear from this example, however, how formalization such as this can help to codify and reinforce the boundaries of the practice and shared meanings surrounding it among practitioners. Interestingly, it is also an example of how these boundaries and meanings, the negotiation of which I described in detail in the previous section, are utilized in practice. The shared understanding of what constitutes a development monk is being explicitly employed to decide if potential practitioners have a claim to the title and the benefits it incurs.

The network's flagship project during my fieldwork was called The Project to Empower Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors (*Khronggan Soem Phalang Khrueakhai Phrasong Nak Phatthana Phuea Sangkhom khuap Khum Padchai Siang*). This was a 20-month program implemented from October 2013 until May 2015 aimed at eliminating "risk factors" among villagers and village monks. The term, "risk factors' in this context primarily referred to *abayamuk* (vice) such as drinking, smoking, and gambling. The scope of the project, however, was much wider than merely implementing projects to combat these "risk factors." The goals of this program were many and varied, including: (1) meeting and working with leader monks and members in networks that engage in development work in the areas of

alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, (2) offering various promotional resources for development monks and other network members to create anti-drinking, smoking, and drug campaigns (3) connecting the new generation of monks at educational institutions to the older generation of development monks (4) supporting development monks who are working in their provinces on projects such as abstaining from alcohol during Buddhist lent and *Suadmon Sang Banya* (meditation for wisdom) (5) funding development research (6) creating spaces for learning and practice for students at monastic universities (7) creating a stage for development monks to present the results of their practices (8) creating a stage for practitioners to present their data to the community (9) producing a medium for gathering and presenting data (10) creating progress and summary reports of development monks activities in their regions (in the form of documents and PowerPoint presentations). As is clear from this, the primary drive of the project was creating an organizational and methodological structure by which future development activities could be carried out (perhaps because it was one of the group's first projects to be implemented).

One of the most interesting aspects of this program (and the subject of the event detailed in the following section) was the development monk "internship" activities, in which each model temple (there were eight in the northeast; see Appendix E) took on an "intern"[25] – a monk from a local university who would spend several months at the model temple of his choice working alongside the abbot doing development work. At the end of the internship period, each of these monks would receive a stipend of 20,000 baht (about 570 USD) to initiate his own development project (presumably modeled after that of the monk whom he had spent the previous months shadowing) in his village. According to Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, this

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[25] The monks with whom I spoke referred to the young monks in training using the English word.

project did not yield the intended outcomes, as the interns who enrolled either did not finish the program or were not implementing their own projects after the program's completion. In fact, as of the most recent regional meeting I attended in May 2016, the most-discussed topic was still how to convince the younger generation of monks to engage in development activism. Despite the internship plan's disappointing results, it is still illustrative of development monks acting as community of practice, going as far as to create a formal program that fosters and regulates legitimate peripheral participation and the transmission of skills, knowledge, and ideology regarding monastic development activism.

Like PDSNO, The Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development (including its representative network, Development Monks for Society) is one way in which monastic development practice and its associated meanings and methods become codified (for example, the development of shared understandings as to what counts as a development monk) and are reproduced (for example, through the adoption of common practices and the creation of disciples). In this case, it does so using a more direct, top-down, and centralized approach, with most projects and policies being negotiated and determined by the central council. An important manner by which this takes place is the allocation of material resources. The foundation's central feature is that it is a funding organization. What is critical is that through the allocation of this kind of funding, specific ideas and practices regarding monastic development are codified, disseminated, and reproduced. The types of activities they choose to fund are *legitimated*, in terms of both gaining official recognition and greater representation (as the account in the following section illustrates). It is an example of what I refer to in the next chapter as ideological and practical "infrastructure," as it creates a path by which certain kinds of development ideas and practices are supported (while others are not). This, in turn, shapes ideas

about monastic development, as well as the forms future engagement takes. As Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun puts it:

Development monks [in the network] all work in the same kind of format, in terms of administration... But we imitate each other. We decide the project and the target group and how we will do it. And especially [important is that] we decide the budget. We then decide the project, and engage in projects that mimic each other. For example, one year maybe we will be involved in eliminating risk factors. Maybe one year we will be involved in meditation [retreats]. One year maybe we will be involved in finding disciples. We do whatever there is a budget for at that time (personal communication, September 14, 2016).

This is compounded by the active recruitment aspect of the foundation. Like PDSNO, Development Monks for Society is highly focused on finding younger monks to act as "disciples" and carry on the practices of the current generation. As mentioned above, this is chiefly accomplished by presenting existing development monks and their practices as "models," reifying them in a way that emphasizes their *commensurability* (the monks' varying practices are all assumed to be instances of the same thing, based on shared ideological underpinnings and implemented using similar strategies and methodologies) and *portability* (it is assumed that these practices can be transplanted from one spatiotemporal context to another). The internship program that was implemented as part of the Project to Empower Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors presents an example of a concrete and systematic method by which these practices are represented and reproduced through the initiation and training of disciples. In the next section, I focus on this aspect of the network's activities with an account

of an exposition/recruitment event that was held at a monastic university in Khon Kaen province in 2015.

4.3.2   Khon Hen Khon, Phra Hen Phra – Shopping for development

In this section, I delve more deeply into the ways in which reifications of monastic development activism are presented and displayed *in situ* using the example of an event held in Khon Kaen Province called *Wethi Chopping "Phra Hen Phra Sang Sasanathayat Phak Isan"* (The Shopping Platform: "Monks Seeing Monks Create Religious Disciples in Northeast Thailand," hereafter referred to as "*Phra Hen Phra*."). Phra Hen Phra was held at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (a national monastic university)'s Khon Kaen campus as an attempt to recruit younger monks (students at the university) to become involved in community activism as development monks. The idea for the event was inspired by a series of seminars, called *Khon Hen Khon* (People Seeing People) sponsored by the THPF (Thai Health Promotion Foundation) through the Foundation for Societal Networking (*Munithi Khruakhai Sangkhom*). *Khon Hen Khon*, which began in 2012, consists of a series of regular recruiting and networking seminars for local activists, especially in rural areas. The goal of these seminars is to expand grassroots involvement in projects aimed at combating "vice" (*abayamuk*) in local communities by promoting collaboration in and allocating government funding to these projects. In order to better understand how *Khon Hen Khon* and *Phra Hen Phra* relate, I will begin with a brief account of a *Khon Hen Khon* seminar I attended in late 2015.

Figure 4.11 - The Khon Hen Khon Logo

The *Khon Hen Khon* seminar I attended was held at a resort near the airport in Khon Kaen province. The event lasted three days, and was focused primarily on allowing local activists to network and exchange ideas about eliminating "risk factors" (*bajchai siang*) in their villages. There were approximately 40 attendees from around the *Isan* area, many of whom were police officers, village leaders, and local politicians. All of the participants with whom I spoke were active in community development campaigns in their home villages, the majority of which focused on the elimination of vices, such as drinking, smoking, and gambling. The event took place in a large conference hall with a stage at one end and no furniture, except for two tables - one against the back wall of the room for registration and one in front of the stage - and metal-framed cushioned chairs, arranged in a wide semi-circle around the center of the room. The floor was covered with a white sheet, on top of which were Thai-style mats upon which the participants could stretch out or lie down. There was also a single wicker bench for Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, the only monk participating in the event. As usual, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was attended by Lung Noi (his lay assistant and former headman in his home village, mentioned in the previous section), who roamed about the hall snapping photographs (which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun uploaded to Facebook nightly). Lung Noi was also in charge of skirting me from group to group, introducing me to the organizers and making sure I was participating fully in the event's activities.

Figure 4.12 - A *Khon Hen Khon* seminar in Khon Kaen province

The seminar's activities consisted primarily of PowerPoint presentations and group discussion, centering around the "risk factors" considered to be threatening peoples' livelihoods in the villages. These were listed as being alcohol, drugs, tobacco, traffic accidents (attributed to failure to wear safety belts and crash helmets), and gambling. The participants would then be asked to form small groups of three to four members and discuss a topic chosen by the event's moderator, after which each group would summarize their discussion and either present it to the room, or send a representative to present it in another group. Most of the group discussions involved brainstorming about possible and actual problems caused in the villages by these "risk factors" and ideas about how to solve them. Interestingly, the participants tended to spend less time focusing on the discussion topic and more making introductions, sharing personal experiences regarding projects they had implemented or in which they were engaged, and exchanging contact information. In this sense, the seminar primarily served as a platform for local activists to network and share ideas. Each of the participants had joined the conference after working on separate projects in their own villages, and most of the people with whom I

spoke had come in search of ways to more effectively implement their individual projects, as well as to find a network of support through which they could coordinate and share ideas and strategies. This kind of format presents another example of the networked-localist approach to collaboration. It is a way that ostensibly grassroots projects can gain access to extralocal resources, in this case the knowledge and support of other practitioners working with similar issues in their respective localities. It should be noted, however, events like these can also serve to limit the scope of local activist practice. By focusing only on these five "risk factors," and how to eliminate them,[26] there is the risk of an array of social and economic problems facing villagers that stem from a variety of complex issues being reduced to this narrow range of causes. I delve more deeply into this criticism in the following chapter.

It was this series of seminars that inspired Development Monks for Society to organize *Phra Hen Phra* events aimed at development monks and potential development monks in across the country. I attended the event arranged by the network's northeast division (headed by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun). Although the format of this event varied considerably from that described above,[27] it was similar in that it was an attempt to connect and exhibit the practices of local activists. The event took the format of an exhibition, with the eight member monks that represent the northeast division of Development Monks for Society (including Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and the head of the PDSNO, Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat) presenting and displaying the activities in which they were engaged at their respective temples. The primary purpose was to find disciples – successors to carry on the development monks' practices – among the student monks at the university. As I mention above, this had been a central topic of

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[26] None of the monks with whom I spoke were involved in networks such as this tackling other kinds of problems, nor am I aware of any lay organizations engaged in similar activities.

[27] The proceedings were so different, in fact, that the only major superficial connection between the two events was nominal ("People Seeing People" and "monks seeing monks").

discussion at both Development Monks for Society and PDSNO meetings, as the monks involved in the networks were becoming increasingly concerned about the ever-advancing average age of the group's members. Most of the active development monks in the region (and, presumably, in the other regions, as well) were well past their 50s and middle-aged monks in their mid to late 40s like Phra Phothiwirakhun were generally considered to be part of the "younger" cohort. This event was, thus, organized as a way to showcase development monasticism in order to recruit the new generation of monks into the practice. In order to do so, the abbots of the eight model temples would present the major development practices in which they were involved. After this, they would choose eight student monks to each undergo a three-month "internship" at one of the temples. As I mention in the previous section, those "intern" development monks would then receive a 20,000 baht stipend (approximately 570 USD), provided by the DDD foundation and the THPF, in order to undertake similar projects in their own temples/villages. In addition to this, there was (as the inclusion of "Shopping" in the event's title suggests) a sales element to the event, as well. The eight monks had brought products from their respective villages and these were being sold throughout the course of the event.

It was held in the university's main meeting hall, a large, open, brightly-lit auditorium. There was a stage opposite the entrance with about 300 chairs facing it. Behind the last row of chairs was an open area with two desks in the center, one for registration and one for refreshments. Lining the walls in this area were eight booths, one for each model temple being featured. At each booth, a product or number of products from the corresponding villages were being sold. Most of these were goods that bore the OTOP seal (see Chapters 3 and 5) and had been produced either directly by or in collaboration with the temple of the development monks in question as part of their development activities. The tables were attended by lay volunteers

from the corresponding village (as it is prohibited for monks to handle money or engage in business transactions themselves). The products ranged from the rice, honey, and the small macramé dolls produced in Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's village (described in Chapter 3) to ivory trinkets and jewelry being sold at the booth set up by Phrakhru Samuhan Panyatro, who is known for operating an elephant sanctuary out of his temple in Surin province. Consistent with the recruitment goals of the event, the hall was rife with promotional materials (signs profiling the monks from the model temples, DVDs being distributed, goods for sale, brochures and pamphlets at each booth, etc.). The booths were arranged in a semicircle around the side of the room opposite the stage, allowing monks and lay-attendees to walk along a single path from one display to another, collecting brochures and asking questions of the monks and volunteers at each stand. At each booth stood a series of signboards, about 1.5 to 2 meters tall. The signs displayed text, drawings and photographs profiling the relevant development monk and promoting the development projects in which he was engaged. At the booth set up by a monk (Phrakhru Monchuakhun) working in Nakhon Ratchasima province to promote healthy living among the villagers there, for example, were boards both profiling him and his temple and detailing the importance of eating a wide range of foods for proper nutrition. Each booth had a flat-screen television playing a video about the monk whose practices were on display. These videos were also being distributed in the form of DVDs, the covers of which featured a picture of the development monk in question and a tagline that hinted at their activities. The title of Phra Phothiwirakhun's DVD, for example was "When the Temple is Truly the Community Center." The DVDs featured videos of the monks' activities, as well as comments and explanations of their projects delivered by the monks themselves (to my surprise, Phra Athikan Wichian's DVD simply contained an interview I had previously conducted with him during a previous visit to his temple, which he had filmed [mentioned in Chapter 3]).

Figure 4.13 - Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun standing in front of his booth [left] and student monks perusing the various displays [right]

As this description indicates, the primary focus of the event was on presentation of the reifications of monastic development work. Each of these booths was set up to showcase practices being implemented in a single locality, using textual, digital, and material representations. Taken as a whole, a major emphasis of these representations was on the diverse range of activities in which development monks engage. While in reality much of the work being undertaken by the eight development monks overlapped to a great extent (all were involved in anti-vice campaigns and projects, for example), each monk was represented primarily by a single type of project unique to him. Even in cases in which the monks' key projects overlapped, each monk was depicted as engaging in different sorts of activities. Both Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun and Phra Athikan Wichian (the monk mentioned Chapter 3 whose ICT center is focused on multimedia production), for example, are highly active in promoting technology literacy among the people in their respective villages. Both temples have ICT centers and training programs, and both monks regularly promote and advocate for monastic development activities via social media. However, at this event, it was only Phra Athikan Wichian whose IT-related development practices were emphasized (even though it was originally Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's ICT center that served as the model for Phra Athikan

Wichian's activities). Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun was, instead, represented by his temple-as-community-center with little mention of his ICT-related endeavors. Despite this, all of the various activities were reified as the same kinds of objects and symbols, and thus ended up being generified to some extent. While the activities being exhibited ranged from those having to do with village and monastic health, to elephant conservation, to technology education, these were presented using a common format, namely, a booth, display boards (all of equal size and similar layout), DVDs (each containing a combination of interviews and temple tours and adorned with a jacket, the only variations in which were in the monks' photo, the text, and the background color used), and local goods bearing the OTOP label. The effect was to generify of these varying activities and the various localities in which they are implemented as commensurable and interchangeable examples of a single practice format.

Figure 4.14 - DVDs promoting Phrakhru Samuhan Panyatro [top] and Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun [bottom]

The first half of the event was open to both monks and laity. Many of the villagers who attended the event were dressed in traditional farmers' garb most often associated with Laos and the northern provinces, consisting of *mo hom*, an indigo-dyed hemp or cotton shirt and a wrapped skirt, called *pha thung*. A *mor lam* (traditional Isan music) band played on stage as student monks and lay-participants meandered from booth to booth, examining the displays and collecting promotional materials. Also walking the floor was the mascot from the Stopdrink Network, who interacted and posed for pictures with the attendees. Following the initial registration and musical performance, the attendees filed into the rows of chairs in front of the stage, with monks sitting on the right side of the center aisle and laity on the left. Hanging

from the ceiling were four large projector screens, two on either side at the front of the seating area and two toward the back. As the attendees took their seats, videos[28] were shown introducing each of the monks and detailing their development activities.

Figure 4.14 - The Initial Presentation

After the initial ceremonial offering, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun took the podium and introduced the group and their mission. He began by talking about the monks' potential roles in solving their communities' development problems and making concrete improvements in the villagers' lives. He spoke of this in terms of limiting "risk factors," examples of which he listed as being alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and gambling. Monks, he stated, can act as leaders of their communities, using religion to minimize these risks and make society better. He listed the aims of this event as being (1) to strengthen the development monk movement and expand development work in the realm of community risk factors, (2) to provide the next generation of monks who are interested in community development work with knowledge and to have them carry on the projects of the current generation (3) to develop learning spaces and strategies for remedying the problem of monks smoking (4) to communicate monks' work to the public, and (5) to reinforce the anti-smoking values among monks and the community. He finished by

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[28] The videos included on the DVDs being distributed

briefly introducing each monk who would be taking on the roles of mentors for the internship program and the activities in which they were primarily involved. Phra Phothiwirakhun was followed by the vice president of the university, a monk named Phra Sawithan Phatthana Bandit, who similarly spoke about the importance of monks being active in society. He emphasized, not only the potential role that monks can play in helping their communities, but also how being active in society may be one way in which Buddhism can remain relevant amidst the shifting social landscape.

> Monks must be leaders working with a network of laity using the temple as the stage and as a center. If there were no leader monks such as these, active temples would be abandoned temples – or if not abandoned temples, then lifeless ones. If there were monks there, they would just be doing nothing – just looking after the temple and [if that is the case] how can our religion survive?

Interestingly, this was one way in which the promotion of monastic development activity at this event, which was primarily aimed at monks, differed from that at those mainly aimed at the laity. In the latter case, focus is often on the application of Buddhist teachings in the construction and implementation of development policies and practices - the role of Buddhism in development. The rhetoric used this event, however, was focused on the ways in which engaging in social activism can help ensure that the temple and Buddhism remain significant and relevant parts of peoples' lives going forward. In other words, it was mostly concerned with communicating development's role in Buddhism.

4.15 - The meeting's afternoon session

Following this speech, the monks broke for lunch and the *mor lam* performers took the stage again. The lay attendees took some time to peruse the display area before slowly filtering out of the hall. The relatively short afternoon session was reserved for the monks in attendance. Only the laypeople directly involved with the event (and myself) remained in the hall. A long table was placed at the front of the room, at which the eight members of the development-monk group sat facing the approximately 40 student monks in attendance. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun began with a PowerPoint presentation, introducing the development monk internship initiative in which selected student monks would have the opportunity to spend time at the model temples training with active development monks. One student would be chosen to train at each model temple for a period of two months, after which he would be given a 20,000-baht stipend to initiate similar development projects in his own village. After this introduction, I was called up to the front of the room, handed the microphone, and asked to explain to the student monks about the nature of monastic development and the role of monks in community activist practice. Following this, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun explained that the goals of this particular endeavor

were to 1) "create a working group or center for collaboration based on the *phuttaborisat si*[29] for contemporary community development," 2) "To allow new monks who are interested in social development to learn from and carry on the work of the current generation of development monks" and 3) "to create a space to solve the problem of monks smoking and other health risk factors for monks, including campaigns about risk factors." As part of this anti-smoking endeavor, a lay volunteer and I were handed a box of candy cigarettes and asked to distribute them to the monks in attendance. While this was going on, the student monks who were interested in joining the internship program filled out the application forms and submitted them to the committee members who would later convene and choose from the list of applicants.

As is clear from the description above, the *Phra Hen Phra* shopping event bore little resemblance in terms of its format and proceedings to the *Khon Hen Khon* seminars that inspired it. Unlike *Khon Hen Khon,* which was aimed at participants who were already presumably engaged in community activism, *Phra Hen Phra* was first and foremost an event aimed at exhibition and recruitment. The purpose of both the event, itself, and the subsequent "internships" were to introduce younger monks to the concept of development activism and to convince them of the usefulness of the endeavor. However, both *Phra Hen Phra* and *Khon Hen Khon* were exercises in the creating and reinforcing the extralocal networks and shared meanings that have allowed localist development activism to act as a community of practice. Like *Khon Hen Khon*, *Phra Hen Phra* also served as a practical and symbolic consolidation of what it means to engage in localist activism and an implicit claim about the possible range of configurations legitimate peripheral participation can take. Here, potential development monks are simultaneously introduced to monastic development activism and presented with a number

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[29] As mentioned in the previous section, this refers to the four Buddhist communities specified in the Buddhist Canon : *bhikku* (monks*), bhikkhubni* (nuns)*, upasaka* (lay men)*, upasika* (lay women)

of specific options as to how they can engage in the practice. This is indicative of one of the defining aspects of becoming a community of practice, which is the development of peripherality. As I mention in the previous section, in the past, the label of development monk was primarily applied retroactively to monks employing Buddhist principles and methods to combat specific problems in their local communities. This inverts that model, giving monks the option to choose to *become* development monks by adopting one or more of these types of projects and then working and training with current practitioners.[30] Furthermore, the goal of this particular event was not to convince the younger generation of monks to engage in any particular development activity, but to *be* development monks (with the specific kinds of projects to be determined – ideally – by local needs) and to provide them with a clear path for proceeding in this endeavor – a method of engaging in legitimate peripheral participation through which they can learn the trade.

There was, however, a heavy emphasis on engagement in a small number specific collaborative practices with state entities. Although all of the eight development monks featured at the event were active in a diverse array of projects, each had some OTOP-branded product on display and was active in working with the THPF and the Stop Drink Network in attempting curb "vice" in their respective communities. The effect of this was to implicitly associate monastic development practice, itself, with these organizations. For the monks who are subsequently selected to participate in apprenticeship programs at the model temples, these programs and institutions will become further embedded in "what it means to be" a development monk as they learn to navigate landscape of monastic development practice with monks who are already deeply involved in those systems. This kind of systematic reproduction

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[30] The "shopping" aspect of this event, thus, takes on a dual meaning. There is the obvious connection to the goods being sold at each of the booths, as well as the more metaphorical interpretation of monks "shopping" for development projects

of certain kinds of monastic development practice is a major factor that leads to the existence of an ideological and practical "infrastructure" that both shapes and enables localist development practice, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

The account of the Foundation for Dharma Deliberative Development/Development Monks for Society in this section serves as an example of the ways in which shared meanings and reifications,[31] which are an intrinsic part of a community of practice, are promoted, presented, and reinforced. The funding apparatus of the DDD foundation necessitates the formalization of legitimate participation in monastic development. Importantly, because the funds are allocated primarily by development monks, this evaluation of legitimacy (at least ostensibly)[32] comes from within the community of practice. This serves to demarcate a clear core and periphery in monastic development practice, with the core participants setting the norms and standards that define legitimate peripheral participation. The internship program and *Phra Hen Phra* shopping event mobilize both financial resources (by allocating money for interns to fund their own projects going forward) and reifications of monastic development practice (the booths representing development monks and their projects) to further codify and enable the process of legitimate peripheral participation through the recruitment of disciples. Importantly, however, these reifications and the manner in which they are presented both generify these projects and assume their portability to other contexts and localities.

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[31] Meanings and reifications that are, in large part, created and negotiated in meetings such as the one described in the previous section.

[32] I qualify this statement because much of DDD's funding comes from the THPF, an outside government organization, which has significant influence over the types of projects that are pursued.

Conclusion

The examples of development-monk networks in this chapter provide key insight into the new ways in which monastic development work is structured, planned, represented, and reproduced. In recent years, as networked-localist development monks have come to form large-scale collaborative networks and organizations, development monasticism has come to exhibit the traits of a *community of practice.* First, and most importantly, they create a framework in which development monks can work together to hone their skills/practices. Meetings and planning sessions like the one described in Section 4.2 are forums in which ideas and experiences are shared and strategies are devised regarding monastic development practice. Through these kinds of gatherings, the monks involved are not merely attempting to coordinate their efforts (although they are doing that, as well), but are also trying to become *better at* development activism. As one member put it at a Development Monks Society meeting, "We must teach each other and learn from each other. We must combine our ideas and our practices. We monks have a duty to connect with each other in this way" (personal communication, May 5, 2016). Inherent in this kind of collaboration is the production of *reifications* that represent the practice or some aspect of it. These reifications can take on a myriad of forms, both abstract and concrete, material and non-material. What is important is that they are the products of the negotiation of shared meaning. The term "risk factors," for example, is a reification, as it is an agreed-upon symbol that – to members of this community of practice – represents a specific set of village-level problems that monastic development activism has set out to address. Likewise, the DVDs and other promotional materials are also reifications, in that they are attempts to encapsulate and represent both specific occurrences of development monasticism, and the practice as a whole based on a shared set of understandings about what it means to be a development monk. The account of the meeting above is an example of how these kinds of reifications are produced, and the exhibition/internship event demonstrates how they are

mobilized/presented. Understanding of these reifications and how they are produced and presented is, thus, critical as it allows for profound insight into how the practitioners themselves have come to understand their practice. Finally, this kind of extralocal collaboration has led to the formation of a core and periphery of monastic development practice, and a shared understanding of *legitimate peripheral participation*. This is especially clear in the search for "disciples" described above. In the account of the PDSNO meeting, we see monks discussing ways in which they can recruit younger monks into development work and how to ensure these disciples are "real" development monks. It is also on display at the *Phra Hen Phra* event, in which student monks (potential peripheral practitioners) are paired with active monks from "model" temples (core practitioners) in order to learn about and reproduce their practices. Both of these are negotiations and the results of negotiations regarding how to enable and what counts as *legitimate peripheral participation* in monastic development activism.

Importantly, this kind of collaboration hinges upon an assumption of *commensurability* among various practices and local contexts. That is, that these differing practices and contexts can be represented in similar ways and that the same kinds of methods and strategies can be implemented therein. When development monks from divergent localities decide that they are going to work on eliminating "risk factors," for example, it is assumed that they are talking about similar problems, with similar root causes and potential solutions. It is, thus, an attempt to make monastic development practices *portable,* meaning they can be transplanted, in part or in whole, from one context to another. Again, this notion of local practices having some degree of commensurability and portability is central to the top-down bottom-up model characteristic of networked localism. It tries to strike a balance between the understandings of commensurability/incommensurability inherent in neolocalism (which sees local contexts and practices as mostly incommensurable) and purely top-down development policy (which leans

toward ignoring local context altogether). Thus, networked-localist development practice also entails some degree of *generification* (though not to the extent of a purely top-down model), as some aspects that may be incommensurable end up being overlooked or ignored. Both the formalized structure and degree of assumed commensurability in these large-scale development networks enable them to mobilize large amounts of outside funding/support, especially from government agencies tasked with implementing localist development projects. As in the example of the Ministry of Energy at the PDSNO meeting given above, government agencies see these monks as effective intermediaries between state-level planning of development philosophy/policy and local implementation. In the next chapter, I explore some of the implications of such state-monk collaborative endeavors.

5   Collaboration or Appropriation? – The Practical and Symbolic Ramifications of State Involvement in Monastic Development Work

In this chapter I examine the implications of extensive government collaboration in monastic development practice. I focus here on state involvement because, as I mention in the previous chapter, the formation of development monks as a community of practice has opened the door to increased ease of access by the state to the greater development monk community, allowing it to have an outsized influence on the kinds of projects that are implemented, as well as their underlying ideological motivations and implications. As I describe in Chapter 2, the Thai government has been actively adopting and promoting ostensibly localist (the ideological and practical framework that attempts to protect or reclaim the local power, autonomy, relevance, and identity in the context of globalization)[1] development strategies. Since then, monastic development projects have frequently come to involve collaboration among monks and government institutions. This, among other factors, has led to large-scale withdrawal of (primarily neolocalist) NGO support from localist activist practices, resulting in development monks relying on government institutions for cooperation in and support for their activities. I argue that this is representative of the Thai government's largely successful attempt to appropriate the practices and symbols of localism, resulting in the reaffirmation of state hegemony and nationalist narratives in Thai alternative development discourse.

In the sections below, I discuss two major implications of this kind of extensive state involvement in localist development practice. The first the creation of a practical and symbolic "infrastructure" that serves as the basis for future development activism. This has, in turn,

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[1] The broad ideological category that includes both neolocalism and networked localism.

resulted in the "channeling" of monastic development practice into state-initiated projects at the exclusion of others, and has shaped the symbolic meanings surrounding localist development in ways that fit a nationalist narrative. The second is a drastic shift in focus from the systematic moral failings of development practices, policies, and ideology to the creation "moral communities" from which it is assumed that economic/material development will naturally arise. This, in turn, portrays the failure to develop as being due to moral failings at the village level while ignoring the larger system-level problems of which these "moral failings" may be more symptom than cause.

5.1   The Practical and Symbolic Infrastructure of localist development

In this section, I examine the role of the state and state entities in shaping monastic development activism (and localist activism, in general), both from in terms of practice and ideology. I argue that this is best understood by thinking of state practices and rhetoric in this arena as practical and symbolic "infrastructure" that guides localist practice into specific channels while excluding others, the active role of which in shaping how people think about and practice localism remains largely invisible.

5.1.1   The Infrastructure of Development

I will describe the impact of the government's involvement in development localism using the notion of infrastructure. "Infrastructure" is a term rarely used to directly describe development attitudes/policies and their repercussions. However, framing them as such represents many of the ways in which these systems function and underscores the mechanisms by which government involvement shapes localist activism, in terms of both discourse and practice. We tend to think of infrastructure as material - roads, sewage systems, and electrical grids. It takes the form of things that exist in the world, which always exist as infrastructure

and as passive, near-invisible facilitators of activity. However, as Star and Ruhleder (1996) point out, infrastructure is not so much a "what" as it is a "when." Things are not infrastructure in and of themselves. They only become infrastructure when used as such. Infrastructure, they contend,

> is a fundamentally relational concept. [Something] becomes infrastructure in relation to organized practices. Within a given cultural context, the cook considers the water system a piece of working infrastructure integral to making dinner; for the city planner, it becomes a variable in a complex equation (p. 113).

In other words, the characteristic of "being infrastructure" is temporal and defined in relation to practice. Things that are commonly perceived as infrastructure cease to be so when not functioning as such. The city planner in the example above treats the water system as the object of engagement and within the context of that interaction, it cannot be considered infrastructure (that is, until she turns on the faucet to get a glass of water). Similarly, that which is not typically thought of as infrastructure can be infrastructure when it acts as such. The Thai state's localist practice and rhetoric falls into this category. It can be described as a kind of "infrastructure" when it is used as a vehicle by which activists (in this case, development monks) talk about and practice localist development and when its active role in this process as is largely invisible or deemed inconsequential. This is easily understood by using the analogy of a road (a typical example of infrastructure) built from point A to point B. It is rarely acted upon directly, and its role as an active force is typically overlooked. However, it plays an active part in channeling movement between the two points. Prior to the construction of the road, people may have taken various different paths to complete the route. Once a road is built, however, it becomes the

"obvious choice," essentially codifying the path. The Thai government's involvement in localist development acts in a similar way, as described below.

It is important to note that I do not claim that the government localism is equivocal to material infrastructure or infrastructure in the form of information systems and archives in all respects or that it should be considered as infrastructure first and foremost. However, there are times when these policies act as infrastructure and when understanding them as such helps to shed light both on the way such policies work and on their implications. In using this construct to describe the localist turn in Thai state-led development, I am attempting to emphasize several key elements of the phenomenon that are often overlooked but, nonetheless, significantly influence both ideological and practical aspects of monastic development activism. First of all, it is, generally speaking, constructive rather than destructive. Although the Thai government's localist push has the effect of driving out development practices that do not support a nationalist model, it does not do so by contesting those practices outright. Instead, it does so through the creation of new models of localist development to which considerable resources are devoted, thus channeling localist development activism into selected areas that fit the nationalist paradigm. This leads to the second element, which is that it creates a kind of path of least resistance in determining what kinds of projects are implemented by development activists. This is easily understood by referring to the road example described above. Like the road's active role in creating an "obvious choice" for a path of locomotion, the Thai government's considerable investment in localist projects leads to the creation of "obvious choices" in localist development practices, which result in the neglect of other configurations. By creating a context where certain types of development activism are heavily supported, those kinds of projects are often implemented by local developers without consideration of the possibility of others. Finally, the active role this channeling effect plays in both what types of projects are

undertaken/implemented and how localist development is conceived of and talked about goes largely unnoticed.

I divide this infrastructure into two types - practical and symbolic (as opposed to material, e.g., sewage systems and highways). The project of state localism acts as practical infrastructure for development monks when it provides them with convenient, ready-to-use tools for implementing specific kinds of development practices. These tools take the form of resources, funding, networks, and so on, which make choosing some kinds of projects (the kind the government chooses to support) over others more practically and materially feasible. I use the term symbolic infrastructure, on the other hand, in reference to the effect of state-sponsored localism on development ideology and discourse. As I have pointed out, localist ideology is heavily concerned with concepts such as "culture" and "identity," and is an endeavor to define these notions just as much as it is an attempt to defend them. The symbolic infrastructure of state localism, then, is the production of ready-made referents by which local culture and identity can be *reified* (see Chapter 4) in a way that is consistent with a nationalist narrative.

5.1.2 The Practical Infrastructure of State Localism

I will begin by discussing some of the ways in which state localism manifests itself as practical infrastructure and what that means for development monks in Thailand. As I write in Chapter 2, since the late 1990s, the government has devoted considerable resources to localist endeavors. In keeping with localist rhetoric, this investment has been largely directed at collaborative projects, with the state actively seeking local actors to promote them and carry them out. They are particularly concerned with enlisting the help of development monks in rural communities. Representatives from government organizations, thus, often work closely with development monks, regularly participating in meetings and advocating for monastic

involvement in specific projects. The previous two chapters are rife with examples of this. Recall Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's Community Digital Center and Cultural Center, which have been supported (as well as shaped) by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Department of Cultural Promotion, respectively. The PDSNO meeting I describe in Chapter 3 began with a 90-minute presentation by a representative from the ministry of energy, in which he explained the costs of energy consumption and urged the monks in attendance to engage in projects directed at conserving power in their temples and villages. As I mention in that same chapter, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the Stop Drink Network (both Government NGOs) play outsized roles in determining the direction of the projects promoted by Development Monks for Society (primarily through their allocation of funds to the Foundation for Dharma Deliberative Development) enlisting the monks involved to help promote causes such as curbing drinking and smoking in the villages.

This collaborative approach to state-led local development creates a practical infrastructure for localist development. Ostensibly, it is a resource that can be accessed by development practitioners on the ground, rather than an example of top-down policy implementation. However, like material infrastructure, there is the risk of its proclivities (by this I mean its tendency to favor one configuration over another) going unnoticed by those who use it. In this case, it is important to understand that there are specific localist goals to which the state's institutional and material resources are directed, and that this is significant in determining what kinds of projects localist activists choose to pursue. Thus, it is primarily the aspects of localism that align with government interests that end up being realized and translated into action. In other words, government involvement in localist development projects leads to development monks working primarily on those projects that conform to the goals of and narratives presented by the state. This happens in two ways: (1) It crowds out other sources

of support (in this case, primarily NGOs) that conflict with this narrative and (2) It makes working in compliance with this narrative the most readily accessible option - the "obvious choice."

I discussed in Chapter 2 how state involvement in localist development activism has led to a lack of involvement of (often anti-government) NGOs in these endeavors. Government involvement in and the allocation of state resources to localist development projects have effectively shrunk the "economic space" (Shigetomi, 2004) within which NGOs work, both crowding them out (especially during the Thaksin administration from 2001-2006) and "absorbing" them (particularly post-2006). In one sense, this can be interpreted as a victory for the localist movement, and the development monks with whom I have spoken have often characterized it as such. The state is devoting more resources to projects that are - at least ostensibly – in line with localist ideology. However, consistent with the idea of infrastructure, we must understand this provision of resources as channeling development activism into specific kinds of projects, while necessarily excluding others. It is, thus, crucial to turn a critical eye to the kinds of practices being implemented (or not implemented) and the implications of that, both symbolic and concrete.

The channeling of localist development practice into state-sanctioned activities is evident in the amount of focus spent on government-sponsored projects since this shift took place. As Lapthananon (2012b) notes, after 1997, the government became increasingly involved in community development and GOs began urging development monks in the northeast to participate in state-led endeavors, such as the OTOP project (examples of which can be found in Chapters 3 and 4). In 2003, after Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced

the Thai government's widely criticized[2] "war on drugs," development monks were "strongly encouraged to contribute their efforts to the rehabilitation campaign" (2012b, p. 178). This is evident in the projects being emphasized by both the PDSNO and Development Monks for Society, which are, respectively, the largest development monk networks in the northeast and the nation as a whole. While the core members of these networks had been involved wide range of social and economic development activities, many have either narrowed their scope to focus on state-initiated campaigns to convince villagers to refrain from *abayamuk* (vice), or have made these kinds of activities their top priority at the expense of the projects for which they were originally known. In 2013, when I visited Phrakhru Samuhan Panyatro in Surin province, for example, who is a development monk known for having turned his temple into a sanctuary for elephants and for advocating for their humane treatment (mentioned in Chapter 4), his office was littered with banners and other promotional materials advocating for abstinence from alcohol. He told me that he had recently become less involved in his elephant-related activism, and had shifted his focus to working with regional development monk networks (the networks discussed in Chapter 4, both of which are funded in part by government entities like the THPF) on anti-alcohol projects. Satawaphet Suwanprapha, the coordinator of the *Khon Hen Khon* project (the series of seminars aimed at local activists discussed in Chapter 4), also pointed out the role of networks in facilitating the implementation by monks of these kinds of government projects. As he put it:

> These monks are interested in doing everything. But the THPF, they are involved
> in [curbing] *abayamuk* [vice], so they have these monks do it. So these groups of
> monks [the networks funded by the THPF discussed in Chapter 4] have to get

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[2] Primarily for the draconian measures taken, such as the extrajudicial executions carried out against purported drug smugglers (cf. Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2008)

involved in projects having to do with *abayamuk*. However, individually they can do anything they want (personal communication, November 6, 2015).

This is not to say that the monks are reluctantly complying with these kinds of state-led endeavors. The development monks with whom I spoke were enthusiastic about and expressed passion for the projects, although many also voiced disappointment at the reduction in scope. However, without the help of NGOs and other activists, the monks must rely on state support, which means engaging in projects that the government is willing to fund. As Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun phrases it:

> Currently, I feel like there is a lot of cooperation between development monks and politics [the government]. This is because if politicians come in and support us it allows us to do development work longer…there need to be organizations that come in and help. But if no politicians help us, the temples have to fund themselves, which we can do, but not continuously (personal communication, February 15, 2014).

The OTOP program is another example of how state-led localist policies serve as practical infrastructure, channeling future development projects through the preferred narrative of the national government. The project began in 2001 under the Thaksin administration as a way for villagers to earn money selling local artisanal products through national and international markets. Local products selected to be part of the project are emblazoned with the OTOP logo and are sold in OTOP shops and at fairs across the country. The project was adapted from the Japanese OVOP (One Village One Product) program, with a key difference being that the Thai government plays a much larger role in the selection and development of products

than does its Japanese counterpart (Kurokawa, 2009). A national committee selects OTOP "Product Champions" [*kan khadsan sudyod* - OPC] and gives products a 1-5 star rating based on export potential, product quality and consistency, production standards, and the product's "history" (Prayukvong 2007).

The amount of money and resources the government has devoted to promoting and implementing this program make it an attractive option for development monks looking to improve economic circumstances in their villages. Thus, as demonstrated in previous chapters, many monks both in the Isan area and nationwide have begun working directly with OTOP as part of their community development strategies. Phrakhru Phothitham Khosit, a monk in Udon Thani province, for example, works closely with the local municipal government in order to produce goods such as *pla ra* (fermented fish paste) and decorative tissue box covers to sell through the program. One reason he has chosen to participate in OTOP is that it offers villagers access to national and international markets to sell their handicrafts.

> Recently our community has become quite famous. We produce *pla ra* that gets
> 4-5 stars. [Representatives from] Korea and Japan come and inspect the
> sanitation [of the production process] every three months. We send it to other
> provinces and other countries as well. We also ship it to Bangkok, where it is
> sold at *Muang Thong* [3] (personal communication, December 6, 2014)

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[3] *Muang Thong* is the place in Bangkok at which the largest OTOP events are held, gathering products from around the country for sale.

Figure 5.1 - Phrakhru Phothitham Khosit with an OTOP tissue box produced through his temple

The OTOP program has created an easily accessible sales and promotion network and a ready-made model for economic development projects in rural communities. For development monks attempting to raise standards of living in their villages, OTOP is useful, convenient, and precludes the necessity to devise other methods – even if other methods may be less problematic or more compatible with the goals of localism. It functions as a kind of infrastructure for the practice of localism, which - as discussed above - becomes the "obvious choice" for future economic development projects and representative of localist development. What is not readily apparent is that it necessarily excludes other projects and other products that may not fit with the narrative the state is attempting to produce. As Michael Herzfeld noted in a lecture given at Chiang Mai University, rather than representing the local communities, themselves, the goods sold at OTOP shops and fairs represent "the products that people are willing to sell under the government niches; and the risk, of course, is that these products will eventually become dominant because of the huge amount of government money being put behind the project" (personal communication, August 19, 2014).

Lack of funding, stricter constraints on expression of political dissension, and increased government resources being allocated to local development have crowded out or absorbed the localist NGOs and activists who had provided development monks support in the past. This has served to bolster monastic involvement in state-initiated development work, such as OTOP and campaigns for "moral" reform. It has created a practical infrastructure - consisting of funding, networks (both lay and monastic) for project planning and implementation, and knowledge and promotional resources - that serves as the basis for future development practices. This has the effect of directing the practical expression of localist development ideology through specific channels, at the exclusion of others, the symbolic implications of which I will discuss below.

5.1.3 The Symbolic/Ideological Infrastructure of State Localism

Although Shigetomi's account of economic and political spaces that help define the limits of NGO development activism is useful, it is incomplete. There is also a third space that greatly influences the power of NGOs to exercise power, that of meaning or symbolism. Thai Development NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s did not merely advocate for the implementation specific kinds of development activities, but also for a reimagined development ideology. This is most evident in the creation of "community culture" in the early 1990s, which, as I mention in Chapter 2, served to define the NGO-led alternative development movement in Thailand at the time.

The government's increased attention to localism in their statements and policies gives the state greater control over the meaning and expression of localist ideology. This not to say that the state's embrace of certain aspects of localism is not genuine or does not represent the traditional goals of localist NGOs and other activists. What it does, however, is give the state

considerable influence in the struggle to define what the movement means and does not mean, how certain key elements of the movement - such as local "identity" and "culture" - are articulated. The starting point in localist discourse has been relocated from the strategies and collective practices of (often anti-government) NGOs and activists to government documents and royal proclamations, creating what I have called above a "symbolic infrastructure" for localist development. It is a discursive framework through which the central referents of localist development ideology - namely local identity and culture - are defined and situated in relation to the nation-state in future discourse.

With the re-appropriation of localist development practice and ideology comes the power to help define the local community itself, as well as its symbolic relationship to the state. This was most evident in the state-led development policies before the late 1990s that were contested by development monks and alternative development activists (such as the replacement of rural forests with monoculture eucalyptus plantations), in which rural development often meant the production of the raw materials necessary for urban growth. These practices clearly placed rural communities in a position ancillary to the central mechanisms of the state. However, as Hirsch (2002) points out, even the seemingly uncontroversial government-led rural development projects of the 1980s and 90s served as "an attempt to impose a rural identity that at once incorporates Thainess and positions the village within the larger entity" (p. 269). He gives several examples of government projects that he claims serve this purpose. One is the *Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong* project discussed in Chapter 4, which has was the initial impetus for and guiding philosophy of the PDSNO. Hirsch argues that this program urged villagers to comport themselves in a way that reflects an idealized (and unified) sense of "Thai" morality. He also points to the imposition of physical representations of village identity, such as the "bounding" of the village through fencing and

centralized infrastructure, as well as to events such as village competitions, which - alluding to Foucault - he refers to as "disciplinary instruments" (p. 267). I argue that even after the turn toward alternative development strategies and localization on which the late 1990s reforms and the 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan focused, imposition of a nationalist local identity and reaffirmation of state hegemony over the village remain defining features of state-led development initiatives. In fact, it is precisely the projects mentioned above and those like them that characterize the recent "localist" policies of the Thai state, and which have subsequently become the core of many development monks' practices. This is not to say that there have been no other attempts by outside entities to define local identity. I have argued, for example, that this was an essential aspect to the Community Culture school of thought so popular among NGOs and other actors in the alternative development movement in the 1990s (Southard, 2011). As I describe in Chapter 2, however, with the large-scale government restructuring and the drafting of the "People's Constitution" in the late 1990s, the Community Culture movement began to fade away as its proponents were either crowded out or absorbed by the newly localist government. In this sense it was all but inevitable that local culture would once again be identified with the state as state-brand localism has come to take the place of that of the anti-government NGOs and activists of the Community Culture movement. This kind of localism seeks to define local identity as both part and representative of a larger national culture. In the case of the practices of development monks, this can be seen in both the adoption of state-initiated local development projects, such as OTOP, and the re-appropriation by the state of the symbolic meaning of traditional monastic development activities, such as tree ordinations. The former represents the local primarily as part of a hierarchy and as one part of a national whole, whereas the latter attempts to portray the local as synecdoche - a small-scale representation of nation identity.

5.1.3.1 Localist discourse as expressed through OTOP

The government's OTOP program is one such example of the symbolic infrastructure of state-led localism. Above, I described how OTOP forms a practical infrastructure that serves as a convenient vehicle for the implementation of localist development projects. More important than that, however, is the way in which it serves as a referent by which concepts central to localist ideology, such as local culture and identity, can be expressed and legitimated. As I argue below, this representation is controlled at all levels by state entities and serves to ratify a nationalist narrative of local authenticity - treating local communities as "pieces" that fit together to form the nation as a whole.

In order to understand this, it is important to recognize that the OTOP label, itself, is a meaningful symbol that increases a product's value. As Phra Phothitham Kosit (the development monk from Udon Thani mentioned in Section 5.1.2) told me, "If the product is just the tissue box [without the OTOP label], there are many of those at the market and many shops that sell them. But if we make them OTOP products, the [sales] price will go up" (Personal Communication, December 6, 2014). This is not merely because the OTOP label is seen as a mark of *quality*. If that were the case, the OTOP brand would be no different from that of any well-known corporation producing similar products - the very thing from which OTOP attempts to distinguish itself. Instead, these products command a higher premium primarily because the OTOP brand and its star rating represent *authenticity*. They are vehicles through which the products being sold are deemed authentically local - that is, consistent with village culture and identity. However we must examine how that authenticity is produced. Who is it that decides what is an authentic representation of village culture, what kinds/aspects of village culture are presented, and what real-world implications do such representations have?

Ritruechai, Ritruechai, Nuchprayoon, and Peralta (2008) have described the management of OTOP as being simultaneously top-down and bottom-up. Goals and strategies of the program are handed down from the National or Central Committee, chaired by the deputy prime minister, and passed down through Provincial and District Committees to the Tambon (subdistrict) Committee, where they are implemented. Moving in the other direction, products are selected for consideration at the level of the Tambon Committees and passed up through the District and Provincial Committees, where the selections are narrowed down, and then to the National Committee, where they are ultimately rated and judged as acceptable or unacceptable.

Upon considering this description, three things become apparent. The first is that every level of the selection and "authentication" process is controlled by the state. It is exclusively government entities who decide which products best represent local communities' cultural identities. Secondly, the process reaffirms a hierarchical model of power in which villagers are managed by a local group, which, in turn, is managed by a higher-level group and so on, until it reaches the level of the state. Even what Ritruechai et al. call the "bottom up" aspect of the selection process can be described as such only in terms of chronology. The power to select products and craft policy – the power to "authenticate" – is greater at successively higher, less local, levels of the chain. The third thing that is clear is that this hierarchical structure mirrors the administrative structure of the government, itself. Village and Tambon (subdistrict) authority is subservient to provincial authority, which, in turn is under that of the national government. Each of the local branches of administration contributes their product, and these products are managed, selected, grouped together at the national level, where they will be packaged and presented as a representation of the national identity as a whole.

Herzfeld has called this process a symbolic "mapping" of the country that is physically portrayed in OTOP shops in Bangkok and elsewhere. Each part of the country is represented as an object, each of which represents a part of a unified exhibit, depicting "a kind of factory in which each segment will produce its own specific product" (personal communication, August 19, 2014). The aspects of local identity being promoted by the OTOP program are those that present the local village as a functioning part of (and subsumed under) a larger national identity. Local authenticity is represented through objects as that which contributes to *Thai* authenticity. The village is the *Thai* village and the products they produce through OTOP are carefully cultivated in order to present a "map" of Thailand to be presented both domestically and internationally. It is a bureaucratic framework and mode of representation that also serves as system of classification - classifying communities as villages as forming the base of a pyramid, at the apex of which is the nation-state. The consequences of this are not merely academic. As Bower and Star write, "even when people take classifications to be purely mental, or purely formal, they *also* mold their behavior to fit those conceptions" (1999, p. 53). The power relationships inherent in OTOP's representations of locality form a symbolic infrastructure for the project of localism and become the referents that help shape localist development practices (as well as being translated into other arenas).

5.1.3.2   The Co-opting of the Tree Ordination

The widespread adoption and royal sanctioning of the "tree ordination" ritual (*buad pa*)[4] is illustrative of the Thai state's usurpation of the symbolic practices of localism. The tree ordination ritual was reportedly first conducted by Phrakhru Manas Nathipithak in Phayao Province in an attempt to put an end to logging activity near his village. According to Isager

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[4] I did not attend any tree ordinations during my time in the field and, thus, give no account of the ritual in any of the previous chapters. However, the ritual has already been well documented (cf. Delcore, 2004; Darlington, 2012) and serves as a clear example of the government's involvement in shaping national (and local) conceptions of local identity so I include it here.

and Ivarsson (2002), after years of droughts, which the villagers associated with the heavy logging, and several failed attempts to halt the practice through petitions and road blockades, he decided to take a religious approach to the problem. He held a ceremony, wrapping a tree in saffron robes, symbolically "ordaining" the forest. Any subsequent attempt to harm the forest, through logging or other means would then be thought to confer religious demerit (*brap*) onto the practitioners. This practice was adopted by other monks in the area, and spread throughout the region, becoming a popular symbolic tool for resisting the encroachment of nonlocal forces into local forests and for asserting local peoples' rights to land management.

However, the meaning of the ritual has changed over time and it has - at least in part - become a powerful tool for reinforcing local forest-dwelling communities' hierarchal relationship to the state. In her book, *The Ordination of a Tree*, Susan Darlington (2012) traces the shift in the symbolic meaning of tree ordination in the Thai mainstream from a small-scale act of protest against encroachment into local forests to state-sponsored events that serve to reaffirm nationalist ideology and the nation as primary warden of local natural resources. She writes that

> [rather] than pushing people to question modern consumerist values as causes of environmental destruction and human suffering, such rituals are increasingly used to support national agendas and to undermine the power of the rural people for whom environmental monks aim to help (p. 12).

This shift from protest to politicking began in the late 1990's, when the Thai government instigated a series of reforms emphasizing the decentralization of state control over rural development (Parnwell, 2005). King Bhumibol publicly advocated for locally oriented

sustainable development practice rooted in a Buddhist worldview (Royal Project Development Board, 1997; Renard, 2010) and in 1997, asked that fifty million trees to be ordained in honor of the 50th anniversary of his accession to the throne. This marked a critical moment, in which the tree ordination ritual transformed form of resistance against state policies and practices to what Tannenbaum refers to as "part of the national political ritual" (2000, p. 122). Tannenbaum, writing about one such ordination in a community of ethnic minorities in northwestern Thailand, argues for a critical interpretation of this state/royal involvement and support. He contends that while the invocation of the monarchy and the presence of state officials lent legitimacy to the community's cause and gave them direct access to high-level officials, it also served to reinforce the hierarchical relationship between the state and the local community.

Isager and Iversson (2002) make a similar argument with regard to a tree ordination in the Northern village of Ban Yang Mae Malo, a primarily Christian Baptist community made up of ethnic Karen. Amid the Royal Forestry Department (RFD)'s tightening of restrictions on activities within protected areas, people in the community (located within the Doi Ithanon National Park) were afraid that they would be forced out of the area. In addition, the lowland villages in the area had recently been experiencing frequent droughts, for which many blamed the "forest eating" minority groups who dwelled on the mountain. In response, the villagers collaborated with the Northern Farmer's Network (NFN), an NGO concerned with conflicts between farmers and the RFD over land rights, to hold a tree ordination ceremony in the name of the king in collaboration with the Department for Environmental Quality Promotion. Isager and Iversson draw upon Vandergeest and Peluso's (1995) concept of "territorialization" - in which the state uses systems of classification of the environment in order to control natural resources[5] - and label this ritual an attempt at "counter-territorialization." However, it is one

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[5] See (Laungaramsri, 2002) for a detailed account of how government-led forest conservation in Thailand,

that, in fact, affirms the act of territorialization, itself. By demarcating swaths of forest for ordination, they were in effect, engaging in and legitimizing the process. They write,

> "Counter-territorialization" becomes in fact part of the overall process of territorialization, but with the important difference that the tree ordination ceremony forms part of a strategy to contest the classifications of the territory built into the Thai state's mode of territorialization (2002, p. 414).

Furthermore, they argue that the inclusion of representatives of the state, the use of a Buddhist ritual, and the invocation of the monarchy[6] was an assertion of the villagers' identities as essentially "Thai." Despite this, and in contrast to Tannenbaum, Isager and Iversson ascribe primary agency to the villagers who chose to conducted the ritual, describing it as a strategic adoption of nationalist symbols and declarations in order to maintain their power and relevance amidst centralization and nonlocal intervention.

The meaning of the tree ordination has, thus, shifted considerably. It has gone from being a symbolic ritual intended to stem encroachment into forests from non-local sources to an attempt to legitimize the local use of land and resources in the face of state regulations through appeal to nationalist values and symbols. According to this model, it is the local people who must defend themselves against accusations of encroachment (upon *national* resources) and the tree ordination is an affirmation of that relationship. While still an invocation of local peoples' rights to land use, the tree ordination has become, in many cases, a way in which

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specifically the national park system, has served to assert state hegemony over local minority populations through classification.

[6] Throughout the ritual, they described themselves as guardians of the forest in the name of the King.

power over the local landscape is symbolically handed to the state. It is less an assertion of local autonomy with regard to resource allocation than it is a plea for permission for access to the resources of the nation-state.

The OTOP program and the reimagined tree ordination ceremony both reflect and constitute the state-oriented symbolic infrastructure of localist ideology. OTOP is a representation through which local communities are "mapped" onto of the whole, placed in a national hierarchy, and represented as a single piece of a larger national identity. Whereas the state's re-appropriation of the tree ordination portrays local identity as representative of a more fundamental national identity and the local community as a representation of the nation, itself. These are not merely practices reflecting a specific kind of ideology, but a symbolic infrastructure - conduits through which future "common-sense" conceptions of local culture and identity are constructed and articulated.

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The localist development policies produced and implemented by the Thai government serve as a future-oriented framework - that is, an infrastructure - for shaping understanding of the local and its relationship to the nation-state. In reframing the state's mobilization of resources toward localist development endeavors as the creation of practical and symbolic infrastructure, we are able to render as visible the active role it plays in guiding both the practical and discursive expressions of localism into channels that conform to a nationalist narrative. This is evident in the practices of development monks, which have shifted from those that contest centralized power and stress local autonomy to those that reflect and reproduce the "structures of common difference" (Wilk, 1995) consistent with state hegemony. In the next

section I build on this notion, examining the implications of this state-created "infrastructure" on the relationship between development and morality in monastic development practice.

5.2 Tracing the Blame: The shift in focus from state accountability to community morality

In the previous section I compared the heavy involvement of the Thai government in localist endeavors – especially in development monk networks – to a kind of infrastructure that guides both localist practices and the ways in which locality and local identity are represented in discourse. In this section I examine how development monks' widespread collaboration with government entities and the resulting practical and ideological "infrastructure" have affected the moral dimension of monastic development activism, specifically what I am calling the "locus of liability" for socioeconomic problems in the villages. Due to Buddhism's emphasis on personal responsibility, "liability" here refers to both faulty action (Feinberg, 1968) and the responsibility to make corrective changes. I use "locus" to mean the scale (individual, local, state, etc.) and actor or actors at/to which liability is ascribed. I argue that the shift from collaboration with neolocalist NGOs to working almost exclusively alongside government entities has resulted in a similar shift in the locus of moral liability that drives monastic development work. Previous generations of development monks located this liability at the system-level, citing the moral failings of national and international development ideology, practices, and policies. In contrast, the current generation of development monks work mainly to create "moral communities" from which sustainable material development will naturally spring. The failure to develop is, in turn, portrayed as originating from moral failings at the individual and village level while larger system-level problems (of which these "moral failings" may be more symptom than cause) are largely ignored. I outline this trend, looking specifically

at the recent focus in monastic development practice on the elimination of vice and the driving economic philosophy of Sufficiency Economy.

5.2.1 Neolocalism and Morality in Buddhist development

The development monks with whom I worked often explained the nature of their activities in terms of ethics (*chariatham*) or morality (*Sinlatham*, *khunnatham*). Although, for the most part, these monks initially became involved in development work out of the desire to improve material conditions in their villages and to strengthen community ties, they tend to see the causes of development-related problems as being rooted firmly in a failure to adhere to Buddhist teachings. Many of their activities, thus, are concentrated on eliminating behavior such as materialism, greed, and addiction, which conflict with Buddhist doctrine and which they see as being a hindrance to development.

The ascription of moral causes to development problems is unsurprising given the naturalistic way in which morality is widely understood in the context of Theravada Buddhism. Charles Goodman (2009) has argued that Theravada Buddhists adhere to an ethical philosophy similar to that of rule consequentialism in the Western tradition, which proposes a universal set of rules, the adherence to which is justified by the consequences. One is not, he says, obligated to follow moral rules as a matter of virtue. However,

> life without the rules is still subject to the Law of Karma, and the grim consequences of performing the actions that would be forbidden by the rules can give people prudential reasons to choose to accept the rules as binding on them (p. 55).

Development monks with whom I worked described social, economic, and environmental problems in the community as the natural consequences of failure to adhere to Buddhist precepts. A comparison often offered me was that between Buddhist morality and natural science. As Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun phrased it, "Buddhism holds that the dhamma [*thamma*] is nature [*thammachat*]… We do not believe in a god, but in principles to guide our own actions… There is only nature and the consequences [of our actions] are natural" (personal communication, May 29, 2016). Failing to act in accordance with Buddhist virtues, thus, represents a fundamental lack of understanding regarding the nature of cause and effect. Correction of these misguided actions and ways of understanding the world is the most direct way to solve social and material problems. The goal of monastic development is to reconfigure the context in which development takes place so as to base it on Buddhist virtues. This takes the forms of both advocating for "moral" development practices and the development of "morals" within the community in order to encourage material (economic, environmental, etc.) development. However, as I argue below, the landscape of monastic development has, in recent years, shifted drastically from the former to the latter.

As I write in Chapter 2, in the first decades of the monastic development movement, its emphasis was primarily on the creation of a moral/ethical economic system based on Buddhist values. The movement first arose when a number of monks began to actively oppose the top-down state-centered development model proposed by the Thai government in its First National Economic and Social Development Plan (Nishikawa & Noda, 2001). These monks were outspoken against what they saw as an overemphasis on greed and materialism that accompanied Thailand's move toward increasingly urban-centered and neoliberal economic policies. They understood these policies as being inherently contrary to Buddhist teachings - specifically, those of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (Dependent Arising), *Mettā* (Loving-Kindness

toward sentient beings), and satisfaction through the elimination of desire. It was this failure to adhere to a development model compatible with Buddhist teachings that was causing the economic and environmental problems they were seeing at the village level, such as rampant deforestation, villagers' increasing debt, and growing income inequality (Swearer, 1997, King, 2009).

Emblematic of this ideology is the outspoken academic monk, Prayudh Payutto (Phra Bhramagunabhorn, formerly Dhammapitaka), who published a booklet in 1988 entitled *Buddhist Economics* (*Sethasat Naeo Phut*, 2005[1988]).[7] In this work (as well as in subsequent lectures and a second edition published in 2005), he argued that a lack of "ethical" (*chariyatham*) consideration in the dominant economic model was a major cause of modern social and environmental problems. He, thus, advocated for a new economic model that did not valorize excess and overconsumption and instead encouraged people to act in accordance with Buddhist teachings (Payutto, 2005). In a 1993 speech at the Parliament of World's Religions in Chicago, he listed three faulty perceptions underlying "modern human civilization" that have precipitated many of the economic, environmental, and social problems of the past decades. These are the beliefs that 1) mankind is separate from nature and should attempt to "conquer" it, 2) that we fail to see other human beings as such, treating them instead as rivals or commodities, and 3) that happiness is "dependent on an abundance of material possessions" (Payutto 1993, p. 3).

This kind ideological framework, which sees an increasingly commodified and centralized development model as a primary cause of local hardship, was prevalent in the

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[7] The term "Buddhist Economics" originally coined by E. F. Schumacher in the 1950s as an attempt to reconcile the field of economics with the metaphysical worldview of Buddhist countries (Zsolnai, 2011). See (Schumacher, 1993)

neolocalist movement described in Chapter 2. As I mention there, collaboration among development monks and neolocalist NGOs and activists was common and they often took similar approaches to development practice. This movement was, at its heart, a refutation the large-scale ideological paradigms that had been adopted by the state and other actors and institutions whom they saw as being non-local. The activists involved therein were, thus, attempting to find a path toward rectifying the immorality inherent in those paradigms by referring to a kind of local idyll (real or imagined). As Phongpaichit (2005) writes, "[T]he main proposition was that, to resist the destructive forces of globalization and outward oriented development, communities needed to look inwards and strengthen their own foundations of resources and culture" (p. 167).

In addition to their rhetoric, development monks' practices were similarly focused on the refutation of centralized/non-local control of local resources and development strategies. There were several monks, for example, involved in the creation of local currencies in order to bolster the local economy and reduce reliance on non-local sources of income, goods, and services. Phrakhru Suphacharawat, a prominent development monk in the 1990s and the abbot of *Wat Ban Thalad* temple in Yasothon province, for example, partnered with localist NGOs in order to create a "Community Currency System" (*bia gud chumchon*) with the temple as the center of operations (Sarakhan et al., 2011). According to Parnwell (2005), the abbot supported the project because it "symbolise[d] important Buddhist principles of sufficiency, moderation and non-attachment" (p. 16).[8] In addition to this, he worked to relocalize agricultural practices in his village after seeing the environmental damage and increase in villager debt that resulted

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[8] This currency was subsequently abandoned after it was declared illegal by the Bank of Thailand and the villagers involved were accused of trying to form a "free state" (*rat issara*). For more information (in Thai) see: http://www.appropriate-economics.org/asia/thailand/bangrajan_kudchum.html

from the government's push to switch from subsistence agriculture to the growing of cash crops for urban consumption (Rungwichaton & Udomittipong, 2001). The creation of community rice and buffalo banks has also been a popular practice among development monks as attempts to relocalize the means of production (and consumption) and bypass the national/international economic systems that they see as having failed the villagers (Suksamran, 1988; Hoffman, 2000; Sivaraksa, 2000). The tree ordination ceremony discussed in the previous section is another practice in which development monks have traditionally engaged to assert local autonomy with regard to resource management (Rungwichaton & Udomittipong, 2001; Delcore, 2004; Darlington, 2012). With all of these kinds of practices, the focus was on reforming the moral failings in the economic/political system, and the locus of liability was, thus, with state and other non-local actors who had (in the minds of development monks) eschewed Buddhist values in their development practices and policies.

5.2.2 Networked Localism and Village Reform

As I have shown throughout this dissertation, the networked localists are much more active in collaborating with state entities on local development projects than were their ideological predecessors. Subsequently, the strategies they employ in community development have changed, along with the locus of moral liability implied therein. There has been a focal shift from projects that attempt to address system-level "moral" problems and their repercussions to practices that place responsibility at the level of the village, household, and individual.

Networked localism is rooted in active collaboration with extralocal networks and entities and its practitioners have, for the most part, exhibited markedly less distrust for the state in the management of local development. This increased collaboration with government

organizations has led to large-scale changes in terms of both the concrete goals of individual projects and their explicit ideological underpinnings. As my account of development monk networks in Chapter 4 illustrates, monastic development projects are now more often than not focused on eliminating on *abayamuk* - vices such as drinking and gambling - as a way to solve social and economic problems in the village. Development monks have also, in large part, adopted state-espoused ideologies, such as sufficiency economy (which, as I discuss in Chapter 3, underlies much of Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's efforts in his temple-as-community-center), as philosophical guidelines for their practices. All of these place the onus for social and economic hardships on the need for local/personal - rather than system - reform and relocate moral liability to the villagers, themselves. In the following sections, I examine the relatively recent proliferation of monastic development projects focused on combating vice, as well as the state-led development philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, which has been heavily incorporated into monastic development practice.

5.2.2.1 Village Vice

As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, as development monks' support from neolocalist NGOs began to dwindle and government-led organizations were actively pursuing monastic collaboration, many development monks began relying on government actors and institutions for support. This means that development monks often end up choosing to engage in projects for which they are able to gain government support, in essence limiting the scope of their activities to those that support the social and economic narrative that the state is currently attempting to invoke. In the previous section, I described the way in which this "infrastructure" has led to an increasing number of monks working at curbing *abayamuk* or vice in the villages, such as the PDSNO's various vice-related projects or Development Monks for Society's focus on "risk factors." Again, this is not to say that the development monks

working on these kinds of projects felt as if they were acting against their ideological inclinations. Although some of the monks with whom I spoke expressed disappointment with the decrease in the diversity of monastic development practice, most were enthusiastic about receiving government assistance for projects they saw as addressing fundamental concerns in their villages. It stands, however, that there are certain kinds of projects being emphasized - through promotion, support, and active recruitment - while others are either being abandoned or becoming secondary considerations. Furthermore, these projects all implicitly present a specific narrative regarding moral liability in development activity and the appropriate targets for reform. Although they are still based in promoting development rooted in adherence to Buddhist virtues, they are much less concerned with the moral liability of those engaged in development work and crafting development policy than they are that of the villagers facing social and economic hardships.

These kinds of projects depict villagers as living in poverty due to lifestyle choices, such as alcohol abuse, while potentially ignoring the socioeconomic factors that may lead to these kinds of problems. A popular television advertisement by the THPF and the Stop Drink Network (and one that is often referred to by development monks working in this arena) serves to illustrate this point. It begins with a depiction of a rural family dressed in rags and sitting in a dingy room with an earthen floor. The man, shirtless, drinks from a beer bottle, shouting, "*Jon khriad!*" ("I'm stressed because I'm poor!") between swigs as his family watches on, exasperated. Suddenly he freezes, looks at the bottle, and says, "I'm quitting drinking." It cuts to a montage, which begins with him working in an empty field, and progresses to shots of him working in an increasingly lush rice paddy, interspersed with scenes of him receiving money, paying his debts, and saving. It culminates with a series of scenes that depict the man going to school, lecturing a group of rural farmers, and standing at a podium giving a presentation with

a sign behind him that reads "Training for taking action: the level of local wisdom toward sustainability." These scenes are punctuated with shots of him and his family, now dressed in a style popular with the Thai middle class, hugging, laughing, exercising, etc. The commercial ends with a low angle shot of the man looking off into the distance against a blue-sky with the voiceover, "Who knows how far the nation will progress if you just stop drinking?" The title of the commercial and tagline for the accompanying campaign was "*loek lao loek jon*" (Stop drinking, stop being poor) (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 2005). This advertisement is reflective of the overarching development narrative put forth by government organizations such as the THPF and the Stop Drink Network as well as the development monks with whom they work. It is one of a vicious cycle in which lifestyle choices on the part of the villagers are the primary causes of their development-related woes, which further tempt the villagers into continued engagement in those activities.

Advocates of this approach often portrayed it as emphasizing self-reliance and as an attempt to find local bottom-up solutions to development problems. However, it ignores a competing narrative that understands problems such as substance abuse as symptoms of large-scale systematic failings. An account given by one activist with whom I worked (I will call him P) of the drug problem in S village illustrates this contrast. P is an independent activist in his 50s who has spent several decades collaborating with development monks, NGOs, and other independent activists on a wide range of localist development projects. He is still highly active, and frequently works with academics and former heads of neolocalist NGOs arranging activities, such as village protests, to assert local rights in the face of what he sees as corporate and state incursion. P told me that in recent years, S village had come to have a severe methamphetamine problem and a large portion of the men in the village were using these drugs regularly. According to P, the problem began when the men in the village started working on

rubber plantations in addition to their regular farming. Workers on the plantations began taking amphetamines in order to stay awake through the night harvesting rubber and still work their farms in the morning. He attributed the need to earn this supplementary rubber income to the debts the villagers had incurred buying chemicals, machinery, etc. when they shifted their agricultural practices from self-sufficient polyculture farms to monoculture plantations with the goal of selling the products on the market. He blamed this shift, in turn, on the government's development campaigns and incentive policies, as well as the involvement of outside corporate interests in local farming. In addition, he said that the reason villagers had access to these drugs in the first place was because corrupt police officers from a nearby city were coming into the village and selling drugs they had confiscated. As I could not find any villagers who were willing to talk about this, I cannot attest to the validity of this account and understand that it may strike some as facile or perhaps even conspiratorial. However, what is important here is that this is the kind of narrative commonly put forth by neolocalist NGOs and activists to explain troubles in the villages. In the example above, P implicates state development policy, which encouraged villagers to switch to monoculture plantations, corporations encouraging the leasing of expensive farming equipment, and police corruption leading to the availability of drugs as primary causes for the village's amphetamine problem. Rather than casting problems such as drug and alcohol abuse as the causes of social and economic strife, according to this view they are symptomatic of larger systemic issues in development policy and ideology.

These examples highlight the contrast between the narratives put forth by the kinds of neolocalist activists with whom development monks had worked in the past, and those offered by government organizations such as the THPF, which (as I described in Chapter 4) currently hold significant influence over the kinds of projects in which development monk networks choose to engage. These current projects tend to treat problems such as substance abuse in the

village as "vice" or moral failings and as the source rather than the result of villagers social and economic hardships. While these kinds of problems are bound to negatively affect the lives of the villagers, the recent campaigns against *abayamuk* (vice) locate liability with the villagers themselves and away from the larger institutions in Thai society and their contribution to local development woes.

These kinds of issues have recently been the focus of a large-scale nationwide project in which development monks are highly active, called "*Muban Raksa Sin Ha*" (Villages Adhering to the Five Moral Precepts). Unlike some of the other vice-related projects I have described, which tend to be headed by village monks/monastic networks receiving support from government organizations, such as the THPF, this project takes a more top-down centralized approach to the problem of vice. It is headed by the National Office of Buddhism under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO - the junta that has been in power since 2014) and works with monks to solve what it sees as national problems by correcting "immoral" behavior at the level of the village community.

The program encourages villagers to adhere to the five Buddhist moral precepts to be obeyed by the laity. These consist of prohibitions against killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and taking intoxicating substances (it is this last precept that tends to receive the most attention). Monks are tasked with holding events in their villages in which they teach about the five moral precepts and distribute "contracts" for the villagers to sign whereby they agree to abide by these rules. The impetus for the project comes from a lecture given by the supreme patriarch (the monk at the head of the Thai Sangha), Somdet Phra Maharatchamongkhalachan, in which he stated,

The five precepts are important for human beings. When all people follow the five precepts together, the people in society will live peacefully and happily. When it is possible, please let villages like that be known as "villages that adhere to the five moral precepts" (National Office of Buddhism [NOB] 2014, p. 5, translation mine).

The ideology driving the program attributes many of society's woes to the lack of adherence to these precepts. A booklet distributed by the National Office of Buddhism details the goals and methods of implementation for the project. In laying out the reasons for the project's necessity, the connection between morality in the community and larger social and environmental problems is clearly stated:

Thailand has had many problems including … crime, the destruction of natural resources, environmental problems, the spread of drugs and vice, conflicting ways of thought, people looking to benefit themselves rather than the group, and the intrusion and desecration of the institutions central to the nation, which are problems that come from a lack of consciousness about morals and ethics (ibid, translation mine).

It is important to note that, like the title of the project, language throughout the document and subsequent campaigns explicitly identify villages (*muban*) and communities (*chumchon*) as the targets of reform, both words that invoke rural villagers (as opposed to the urban middle class or political elites).[9] This is not surprising, as it has been primarily rural

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[9] Though the word "*chumchon*" can technically refer to any group of people living together in one place, urban or rural, it is rarely used to refer to people in an urban setting and in conversation is often used interchangeably with "village."

villagers who have been most vociferous in their opposition to the junta and its policies. According to this philosophy, the failure of the villagers to act in accordance with Buddhist morality is seen as the cause of problems not only in the village (as is the case with the campaigns headed by the THPF), but also of the nation as a whole, including the political turmoil that led up to the 2014 coup. This turns the narrative of the neolocalists, in which national policy and ideology were responsible for village problems, on its head. Whereas they saw moral failings in the national system as the source of development-related problems in rural areas, this program places the locus of liability for national turmoil in village communities and the households therein.

5.2.2.2 Sufficiency Economy

In terms of explicit philosophy, there has been none so influential on monks' economic development activities as that of *sethakhit pho phiang*, or "Sufficiency Economy." As I describe in Chapter 3, The origin of the Sufficiency Economy ideology is most often traced back to a speech made by King Bhumibol in response to the 1997 financial crisis in which he called for local communities to become more self-sufficient and practice economic moderation while refraining from overconsumption.[10] This has since been widely adopted by government and non-government development organizations and was made a central guiding principle of the 8th – 11th National Economic and Social Development Plans in the hopes that such an approach could shield the Thai economy from market fluctuations and buffer against another economic bust. Due in large part to relentless promotional campaigns, Sufficiency Economy has subsequently entered the mainstream Thai development lexicon and was by far the most

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[10] Full English transcript available at http://kanchanapisek.or.th/speeches/1997/1204.en.html

common referent used by development monks I interviewed to describe their economic philosophies. One of the primary stated goals of the PDSNO, for example, is "to introduce the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy as a driving force toward concrete results in all areas around the country."[11] Even Phra S. (the monk opposing the construction of the goldmine discussed in Chapter 2), who has adopted a decidedly neolocalist development philosophy references the concept. However, he employs it as a way of criticizing the kind of corporate ideology he sees as leading to the mine's deleterious effects on local well-being, saying:

> Corporations do not have words like *phaen din tham phaen din thong* [Land of Dhamma, Land of Gold] or Sufficiency Economy in their hearts at all. Companies have a lot of capital in order to get more profit. This is because they only exist for profit, to make as much of it as possible. This is not compatible with Sufficiency Economy (personal communication, September 12, 2013).

It is, thus, clear that the idea of Sufficiency Economy has come to form the basis a variety of (sometimes contradictory) views regarding local development. In fact, part of what has made this such an attractive referent for various actors is its malleability. The ideology of Sufficiency Economy as originally proposed by King Bhumibol was merely a call for change in Thai citizens' economic attitudes, and did not contain any specific guidelines for its implementation. This has led to there being a wide range of applications and interpretations. As Kevin Hewison writes, "SE [Sufficiency Economy] is so broadly defined that it really is whatever one wants it to be" (2008, p. 214). It was, thus, the academics, policy makers, and activists who championed the cause in the years following its introduction who were eventually responsible for something

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[11] From a 2007 PowerPoint presentation on *Phaen Din Tham Phaen Din Thong* ideology given to me by Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun (translation mine).

like codification of the philosophy (Ivarsson & Isager, 2010), and government actors and agencies subsequently began appropriating the term in order to legitimate their own political practices and policies (Intravisit, 2005). It should come as no surprise, then, that while the Thaksin administration had paid little attention to the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy in terms of the creation and execution of rural development policies, the 2006 coup saw a renewed push for large-scale implementation of this ideology. The military government promoted it as the backbone of their economic philosophy, going as far as to include it in the 2007 constitution. This had the effect of creating a kind of symbolic shorthand through which the military government could assert their legitimacy by tying their efforts to religion and the monarchy. It also gave them a vehicle of criticism through which they could delegitimize the policies of the democratically elected government they had replaced. Krittian (2010) argues that the post-coup government's focus on advancing the ideology of sufficiency economy was primarily an attempt to refute "Thaksinomics" – the range of rural subsidies and populist economic policies that had characterized the recently ousted regime – in favor of a royalist ideology. According to this understanding of the philosophy, the problem with the previous regime was that it was investing in large-scale top-down subsidy and micro-financing programs rather than promoting economic moderation at the grass-roots level. Sufficiency Economy-based programs are, thus, billed as attempts to address that problem by offering solutions to the grass-roots causes of poverty and underdevelopment. Thaksin's localist development policies were, as Walker puts it, "repainted" (2010, p. 242) as endeavors aimed at sufficiency economy, with emphasis on their moral and religious connotations. Walker writes, "The primary objective of the sufficiency economy campaign was to publicly construct a moral connection between royal virtue, the sufficiency economy philosophy and the new political regime in which electoral power was to be constrained" (2010, p. 261).

A booklet published by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) describes the three main characteristics of Sufficiency Economy as being - 1) moderation – living within one's means, 2) reason – acting in accordance with the law, morals ethics and culture, and 3) immunity – being prepared to adapt to socioeconomic changes (by saving money, etc.). It goes on to detail three equally ambiguous conditions that must be met in order for Sufficiency Economy to exist. These are 1) morals – for citizens to act morally and without greed, 2) knowledge – to exercise knowledge and caution when applying theory to practice, and 3) life – to base one's life on restraint, diligence, morality, and wisdom (NESDB, 2007). The philosophy is touted as being applicable at both an individual and system level. However in practice, these conditions tend to translate into projects aimed at promoting lifestyle changes at the individual/village level, such as the campaigns against *abayamuk* described above. In fact, vices such as drinking and gambling are often cited by development monks and other proponents of Sufficiency Economy as go-to examples of villagers' lack of restraint causing economic hardship. As Canyapate and Bamford write, "Rather than trying to achieve a balanced, sustainable economy by means of societal measures such as progressive taxation, laws banning usury, or limits on the exploitation of natural resources, SE looks to individuals to police their own economic activity" (2009, p. 147).
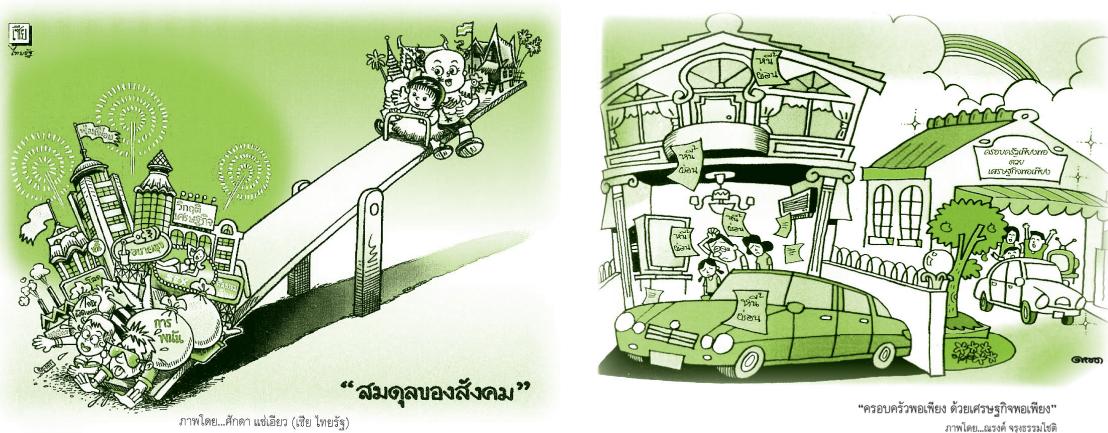
Figure 5.2 - Cartoons excerpted from NESDB's booklet on Sufficiency Economy depicting vice [left] and overspending [right] as causes of economic hardship (NESD, 2007).

This is in keeping with a Buddhist understanding of economic liability in that it proposes a "middle path" (Ivarsson & Isager, 2010) approach to economic development that emphasizes moderation and discourages greed and overconsumption. Proponents of Sufficiency Economy explicitly describe these aspects as being based on Buddhist principles. However, the philosophy clearly emphasizes different targets for moral reform from that of development monks in previous decades. Compare this to the philosophy that guided the community currency attempt at economic moderation mentioned briefly above. Although these approaches stem from a similar ideological appeal to financial restraint and a de-emphasis on rampant materialism/consumerism, in the case of Sufficiency Economy, the locus of liability is at the local/individual level. The assumption behind the push for community currency was that local problems stemming from greed and materialism could be solved if economic activity was localized and shielded from the system that valorizes these ideals. The modern sufficiency economy movement, however, cites irresponsible economic behavior on the part of the villagers as the focus of reform and largely ignores more systematic concerns.

* * *

The collaborative endeavors among state entities and development monks that have become commonplace in monastic development activism have tended to turn to local communities for the causes of and solutions development's discontents. While these purport to be examples of true bottom-up development, the standards of proper village culture and conduct are approved - if not created - at the extralocal level. Furthermore, for development monks, this means that the moral focus of Buddhist development activism is on the villagers, themselves, and much less attention is paid to state and non-local actors' roles in village—level problems. Although factors such as alcohol abuse, smoking, gambling, and overspending no doubt play a part in villagers' social and financial woes, these have become the primary focus of many monastic development groups, while systematic "moral failings" such as those inherent in state-level economic policy and ideology remain largely unaddressed.

Conclusion

Since the implementation of the First National Social and Economic Development Plan and other attempts to centralize and homogenize development practices in Thailand, the Thai government has long been in conflict with localist development activists, who advocate for a bottom-up approach that takes community culture and identity into consideration. However, the state's ostensive focus on "bottom-up" development policies since the late 1990s has greatly altered this dynamic. Rather than directly opposing dissident forms of localist activism, the government reasserts hegemony over the local and crowds out dissenting views by coopting the symbols and practices of the localist movement. In doing so, it gains direct control over how those symbols and practices that are at the heart of that ideology are understood and articulated. As Roseberry (1996) writes, "What hegemony constructs … is not a shared

ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about and acting upon social orders characterized by domination" (P. 80).

The widespread involvement of the state in monastic development practice, while enabling the greater mobilization of resources, has also altered both the kinds of projects that are pursued and the ideological and discursive contexts in which they are embedded. In this way, state support for localist development work acts as a kind of practical and symbolic "infrastructure" upon which future development projects operate. In terms of practice, this means the channeling of monastic development work into specific types of projects (namely, those that the state is willing to support) at the expense of others. This is evidenced by the growing number of development monks turning to programs like OTOP and the THPF's vice-reduction campaigns as "ready-made" solutions for local social and economic problems, as opposed to the individual village-centric programs instituted by development monks in past decades. Importantly, there is also a symbolic component to this development infrastructure, in which the development projects that are supported tend to be those that portray local villages either as ancillary (as in the OTOP program) or representative (as in contemporary tree-ordination ceremonies) of the nation as a whole. This infrastructure has come to inform the ideological underpinnings that lie at the heart of the practices in which development monks engage – specifically the locus of moral liability for development-related problems. The development monk movement, once primarily active in advocating for system-level reform, is now characterized by collaboration with state entities on projects aimed at village-level reform. The moral liability ascribed to development-related problems (i.e. the failure to adhere to Buddhist principles) has, thus, moved from the socioeconomic policies and ideologies adopted by the state to the personal choices made at the village/individual level. This is especially apparent in programs looking to eliminate vice in the villages, such as *Muban Raksa Sin Ha*

(Villages Adhering to the Five Moral Precepts), which locate the liability for socioeconomic problems in villagers' failure to obey basic moral rules. Similarly, the widely-adopted philosophy of Sufficiency Economy looks to villagers' failure to properly manage their finances (not living within their means, not saving, spending money gambling and drinking, etc.) as the cause of their economic woes. Thus, while recent state involvement in localist development work has enabled development monks to more effectively mobilize resources and implement certain types of projects, it is important to critically examine the practical and symbolic implications of the resulting practices. This is especially true when the stakeholders are government entities, which have a vested interest in contextualizing localist development as part of a nationalist framework and reinforcing a hegemonic understanding of the relationship between individual localities and the nation-state.

6 Conclusion

The goal of this research was to examine the changing roles of development monks in northeast Thailand. I argue that contemporary monastic development work is characterized by the embrace of an ideology that I call networked localism, in contrast to the neolocalist ideology attributed to development monks by researchers in the past. Neolocalism is described as an attempt to assert local identity, power, and autonomy through the refutation of "non-local" modernizing forces and a return to a past way of life in which the local was more relevant. Networked localism, on the other hand, seeks to take extralocal resources, expertise, and convenience and embed them in a framework of local community, repurposing them for the advancement of localist ideals. Networked localist practice is, thus, characterized by (1) the application of information and communication technology for the purposes of networking, promotion, and in solving local problems (2) the localization of extralocal systems and resources and (3) involvement in large-scale collaborative networks involving monks, lay activists, and government organizations.

This shift mainly took place after the 1997 financial crisis, as the Thai government underwent large-scale restructuring and began to adopt an ostensibly more localist approach to development rhetoric and practice. This has had the effect of either crowding out or absorbing the neolocalist (often anti-government) NGOs that had traditionally provided support for development monks' projects. Development monks, thus, began collaborating with government agencies, many of which actively sought monastic involvement in their various projects and policies. This kind of collaborative model also helped to alter the ways in which development monks were perceived as political (or non-political) entities. With the shift away from neolocalist development ideology, a sharper distinction has developed between monk-led

community development and political activism from the points of view of the Sangha, the government, and the public at large. While both neolocalist and networked localist development monks insist that their practices are apolitical in nature, they appeal to different referents when making this claim. Neolocalist monks tend to assert their apoliticality primarily by contextualizing their practices in a monk's traditional duty to the local community. Networked localists, however, tend to point to the fact that they work with rather than working to contest state organizations and policies. Another important distinction is how the neolocalists and networked localists understand locality and its relation to *place*, that is – embeddedness of spaces in history, identity, and relatedness (Augé, 1995). Both localist ideologies ascribe primary importance to the notion of *place* and re-asserting its role against the increasing prevalence of *non-place*, spaces associated with individualism, immediacy, and anonymity (ibid) in the context of globalization and supermodernity. However, while the neolocalists attempt to do this by resisting the encroachment of non-local modernizing forces, networked localists attempt to repurpose the tools and symbols of supermodernity for the purpose of re-embedding village life in *place.*

Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's temple-as-community-center provides a clear example of how this philosophy of networked localism is manifest in practice. His temple complex, consisting of a wide range of facilities, including an ICT center, a co-op convenience store, a financial institution, an OTOP production center, a children's center, a culture center, etc., is primarily an attempt to link the local to the extralocal and re-embed institutions that have come to be associated with *non-place* and supermodernity in *place*. He does so by making his temple a kind of network hub, facilitating and mediating the connection between local and extralocal, both allowing local access to extralocal resources and recontextualizing those resources and their attendant symbols in a way that asserts the relevance of history, identity, and community

in village life. Importantly, Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's endeavors ensure that the temple (and, by extension, *place*) occupies a position of *betweenness centrality* – that is, if it were to be eliminated, the network in which it operates would be unable to function without significant restructuring – in key spheres (in particular, technological, economic, and educational) of village life. The digital center, for example, serves as both an access point for high-speed internet in the village and a way to draw villagers into the temple to conduct their online business, thus embedding these activities in the local community. Similarly, the financial center offers the convenience of banking and loans in the village and does so in a way aimed at both creating community cohesion and teaching the villagers about frugality and self-reliance (which Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun sees as being traditional local values). In the process, he also employs the symbols of supermodernity, such as the aesthetic qualities of a Café or convenience store, essentially reappropriating them in his attempts to maintain the relevance of *place* in the basic institutions of everyday life.

At the extralocal level, networked localist monastic development endeavors are characterized by extensive collaboration with other actors and institutions. This movement toward extralocal collaboration has led to the formation of large-scale development-monk networks, in which members share ideas and strategies, procure funding, and plan future projects. The two most active of these networks in the northeast are the Phaendin Dhamma-Phaendin Thong Development Sangha Networks Organization (PDSNO) and Development Monks for Society. These networks are clear illustrations of how this kind of networked localist collaboration has laid the foundation for development monks to become a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). By this, I mean that they have come to form a community in which (1) members come together to hone their skills and implement their practices, (2) reifications (objects, meanings, etc. that represent the practice/practitioners or some aspect of

them) are produced, negotiated, shared, and reproduced, and (3) inclusion in the community is achieved through *legitimate peripheral participation*. In PDSNO meetings, monks from provinces throughout the Isan region gather to discuss collaborative plans and strategies, as well as share their own experiences in their respective communities. Implicit (and sometimes explicit) in these discussions are negotiations as to the meanings surrounding monastic development practices, what counts as legitimate peripheral participation and how to foster it, and how to represent themselves and their practices through reifications. The nation-wide network, Development Monks for Society (as well as the Foundation for Dhamma Deliberative Development that the group represents) also highlights the ways in which development monks have come to act as a community of practice, especially with regard to the representation and reproduction of their practices. This was particularly clear at the 2015 *Phra Hen Phra* event in which the development practices of representative monks were exhibited digitally (DVDs), textually (pamphlets and signage), and through objects (OTOP goods for sale). The following internship program, in which each of the young monks selected would shadow one of the "model" development monks for a period before attempting to reproduce these practices in their own communities, created a clear path for engagement in legitimate peripheral participation in monastic development activism. Importantly, all of these collaborative efforts assume that these local practices can be reified in a way that renders them *portable* – able to be transplanted to other localities. It also implies that there is a degree of commensurability among these various practices, as they tend to be represented in the same ways. Similar strategies are developed and applied universally, and – in some cases – one type of practice can essentially be switched out in favor of another if the need arises. Another important repercussion of development monks functioning as a community of practice is that there is a degree of homogenization that takes place as certain practices are implemented to a greater extent than others, particularly those for which the major networks receive funding.

This funding more often than not comes from government sources, such as the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF), and is an example how the Thai government has made a shift in recent years toward localist rhetoric and policy. The subsequent state involvement in localist development discourse and practice has created a kind of practical and symbolic "infrastructure" (cf. Star & Ruhleder, 1996) for localist development, upon which the majority of contemporary monastic development practices function. This practical infrastructure affects the kinds of practices in which development monks engage. Specifically, when large amounts of resources are devoted toward certain types of projects, such as OTOP or the elimination of *abayamuk* (vice), these projects become the "obvious choices" for monastic development work, often at the expense of others. This kind of involvement also creates a symbolic infrastructure of localist development, in which localist discourse is shaped by the emphasis on concepts and projects that fit a specific narrative of local identity (and especially its relation to the nation state). The projects the state support tend to imply a narrative either of local communities as representative of "Thainess" (as is the case with contemporary tree ordination ceremonies) or as ancillary parts of the nation as a whole (as in the OTOP program). In either case, local identity is understood to be relevant only insofar as it contributes to national identity. This kind of "infrastructure" has also affected how Buddhist development projects are approached and understood from a moral standpoint. While the practices of development monks have always had an underlying moral component, the locus of the moral liability – that is on whom and at what level moral failings (and, thus, responsibility for reform) are attributed – has changed drastically in recent years. During the first decades of the movement, development monks and other neolocalists were focused on what they saw as the system-level moral deficiency of economic policy and practices that emphasized materialism, greed, and rampant consumerism. With the rise of state localism, however, networked localists have begun focusing more on

what they would call "grass roots" approaches aimed at teaching villagers to help themselves solve their development-related problems. These kinds of approaches, such as Sufficiency Economy and other campaigns aimed at eliminating village vice, tend to locate moral liability for socioeconomic failings with the villagers, themselves rather than the system at large. Thus, villages, households and individuals are attributed the moral liability for local development woes, while larger systematic problems remain largely unaddressed.

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The past decades have seen significant changes in the ways in which localism is discussed and implemented that have fundamentally altered the landscape of monastic development practice. The contemporary development monk movement in Thailand is simultaneously local and extralocal, religious and political. It takes place in both village and virtual communities, and is at once a source of top-down development strategies and grass-roots activist practices. Not only would it be impossible to untangle these seemingly discordant attributes, such an endeavor would yield little significant insight into the ways in which notions of locality are negotiated, understood, and reproduced in this context. Instead, it is important that we focus on their simultaneity, attempting to trace the ways in which these elements work through and construct one another as manifest in both ideological discourse and practice on the ground. As Donald Moore writes, "The challenge of a critical anthropology remains understanding how development and politics are woven together in particular localities, differently deployed, and given form and substance through cultural practices" (1999, p. 675). My hope is that this research is able to contribute to a framework out of which we can begin to address that challenge. More narrowly, my goal is to alter the discourse surrounding monastic development activism in Thailand, setting the stage for new avenues of critical investigation

into this topic. While the research presented here aims to provide a starting point from which future work can move forward, there are still many important questions that remain unanswered. How are these practices and their ideological implications understood by the villagers they target? What ramifications have they had in those people's everyday lives? What happens when shifting political winds propel state funds in new directions, or away from monastic development altogether? Research into questions such as these would provide a deeper understanding of the new paradigm of monastic development activism in Thailand and, more generally, of the role of localism in a world increasingly characterized by interconnectedness and extralocal community identity.

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8 Appendices

Appendix A
Monks Residing at *Wat* Phothikaram in 2016

	Name	Age	Years Ordained	Education Level	Area of Responsibility
1	Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun	47	27	Dhamma Scholar Advanced Level, Bachelor of Arts (Buddhist studies), Master of Arts (Buddhist Studies, Honorary)	Abbot, Ecclesiastical District Officer
2	Phrakhru Phothipanyanuku	42	21	Dhamma Scholar Advanced Level, Bachelor of Arts (Buddhist studies),	Promotion/dissemination, Welfare
3	Phra suphod Sumethi	42	19	Dhamma Scholar Advanced Level, Bachelor of Arts (Buddhist studies),	Community Digital Center
4	Phra Somsak Paphaso	33	7	Bachelor of Arts	Secretary, General Management
5	Phra Nataphon Chayannutho	25	2	Dhamma Scholar Entry Level, Vocational Certificate	Training, Secretary
6	Phra Mahasurat Techuanno	44	13	Dhamma Scholar Advanced Level, Buddhist Theology Level 4	Grounds
7	Phra Chan Ticha	67	1	Elementary School Grade 4	Buildings/Grounds

Appendix B
Map of *Wat* Phothikaram
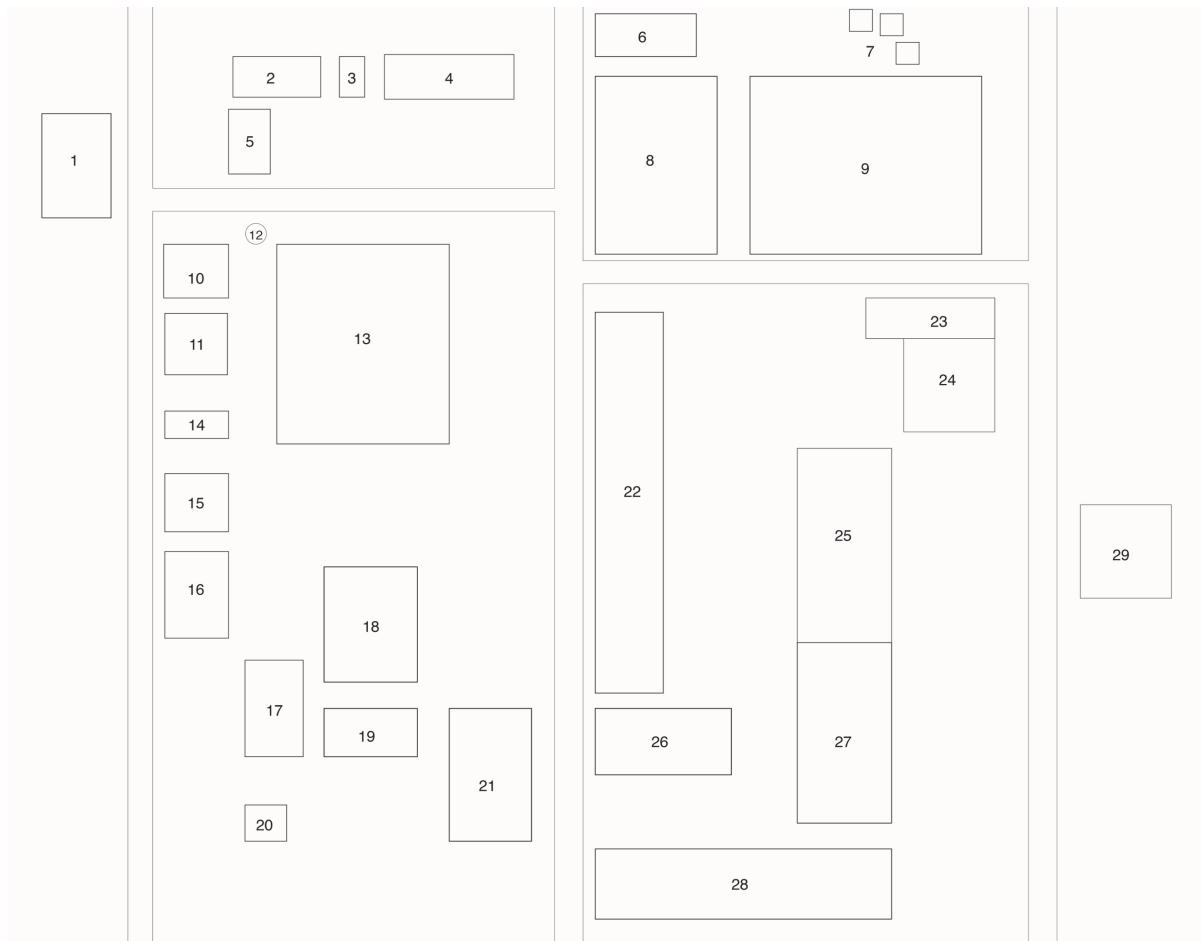
1. Children's Center	2. Cultural Center	3. Washrooms
4. Resource Room	5. ICT Center	6. Guest Rooms
7. Monks' Quarters	8. Ordination Hall	9. Main Event Hall
10. Health Center	11. Meeting Room	12. Radio Tower
13. Main *Sala*/Kitchen/ Radio Station	14. Washrooms	15. Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun's Office
16. *Wihan* (prayer room)	17. *Sala* (rest pavilion)	18. Outdoor Stage
19. Storage Room	20. Crematorium	21. *Sao Sen* Convenience Store
22. Parking Area	23. Café Potikaram	24. New Meeting Room and Guests' Quarters
25. Museum	26. Financial Institution	27. Storage Room
28. Prayer Hall (under construction)	29. OTOP Production Center	

Appendix C
Members of the PDSNO Main Committee

|		
Chairman	Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat	*Wat* Thep Mongkhon, Amnat Charoen
Vice Chair	Phrakhru Amonchaikhun	*Wat* Asonthammatayad in Nakhon Ratchasima province
Secretary	Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun	*Wat* Phothikaram, Roi Et province
Public Relations	Phrakhru Silaworaphon	*Wat* Nonmuang, Nakhon Ratchasima province
Treasurer	Phrakhru Sankharak Chanwuni	*Wat* Banyanglum, Ubon Ratchathani province
Registrar	Phra Athikan Wichian	*Wat* Sakate, Roi Et province

Region 8 Udon Thani, Nong Khai, Loei, Sakon Nakhon, Nongbua Lamphu	**Representatives** Phrakhru Phiphathanaphibun, Phra Athikansarawuthi Panyawu	
Udon Thani	Phrakhru Phothitham Khosit	*Wat* Phochai
Loei	Phra Athikansarawuthi Panyawu	*Wat* Sawang Loeng Saeng
Sakon Nakhon	Phrakhru Prachak Sithatham	*Watpa* Santitham
	Phrakhru Sangwon Thamwong	*Wat* Buraphaphirom
Nongbua Lamphu	Phrakhru Phiphathanaphibun	*Wat* Siritham Phatthana
Region 9 Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, Roi Et	**Representatives** Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun, Phra Athikan Wichian	
Maha Sarakham	Phra Mahaprakit Thitayano	*Wat* Somnat
Roi Et	Phrakhru Suwan Phothaphiban	*Wat* Pho Roi Ton
	Phrakhru Wimon Sangwonkhun	*Watpa* Mettatham
	Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun	*Wat* Phothikaram
	Phra Athikan Wichian	*Wat* Sakate
	Phra Mahathongchan Komlo	*Wat* Thasabaeng
Region 10 Ubon Ratchathani, Sisaket, Nakhon Phanom, Yasothon, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen	**Representatives** Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat, Phrakhru Sisutalangkan	
Ubon Ratchathani	Phrakhru Sutabun Pasathit	*Wat* Burapha
	Phra Siriphatthanaphon (deceased)[*]	*Wat* Thungsimuang

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[*] Although Phra Siriphatthanaphon died in 2014, he is still kept on the registry and considered a member of the group. During roll call at PDSNO meetings jokes were often made that Phra Siriphatthanaphon had called ahead of time and said that he would not be able to make it.

	Phrakhru Ratonrangsi Phithak	*Wat* Gaewrangsi	
	Phrakhru Suphakit Mongkhon	*Wat* Nonmakhua	
	Phrakhru Sisutalangkan	*Wat* Sawang Arom	
Nakhon Phanom	Phrakhru Suwimon Phatthanakhun	*Wat* Thepphraiwan	
	Phrakhru Buanpri Yatikit	*Wat* Sawang Suwannaram	
Amnat Charoen	Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat	*Wat* Thep Mongkhon	
	Phrakhru Achantawit Sunyathat	*Samnaksong* Lakkhamwanaram	
	Phrakhru Ukhom Phothikit	*Wat* Pho Sila	
	Phrakhru Kittikoson	*Wat* Phrasicharoen	
	Phrakhru Sirisilawat	*Wat* Amnat	
Region 11 Nakhon Ratchasima, Buriram, Chaiyaphum, Surin	**Representative** Phrakhru Amonchaikhun		
Nakhon Ratchasima	Phrakhru Thawonkhunakon		*Wat* Sawang
	Phrakhru Phatthanakit Chanuyut	*Wat* Huaibong	
	Phrakhru Silaworaphon	*Wat* Nonmuang	
	Phrakhru Wimonsanwisut	*Wat* Nonghuaraet	
	Phrakhru Wisansilakhun	*Wat* Maptakoen	
	Phrakhru Chirawat Isusaro	*Wat* Khosisaket	
	Phra Samusuraphong Pasanunchitto	*Wat* Nontaklang	
	Phrakhru Amonchaikhun	*Wat* Asonthammatayad	
	Phra Mahaprachak Thamkhosako	*Watpa* Anurak Nongwaennoi	
Buriram	Phra Wirot Thamphirak	*Wat* Bansakaesam	
Chaiyaphum	Phrakhru Wibunkhunakon	*Wat* Sawang Wari	
Surin	Phrakhru Wibuntham Khosit	*Wat* Prasophasuk	
	Phra Athikanthapthim Anawilo	*Wat* Maisimakthong	
	Phrakhru Sophonbunyakit	*Wat* Amarinsaram	
	Phrakhru Samusan Panyatharo	*Samnaksong Watpa* Achiang	

Appendix D
Organizational Structure of Development Monks for Society Reducing Risk Factors

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │      Director       │
                        │  Phrakhru Suwan     │
                        │   Phothiwontham     │
                        └─────────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┬──────────┴──────────┬──────────────────┐
┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────┐ ┌───────────────────┐ ┌───────────────────┐
│ Project       │ │ Coordination/ │ │ Assistant         │ │ Financial         │
│ Advisory      │ │ Management    │ │ Coordinator       │ │ Administrator     │
│ Committee     │ │ Pranat Keram  │ │ Chaloemkian       │ │ Sansani Hidnui    │
│               │ │               │ │ Jomgaew           │ │                   │
└───────────────┘ └───────────────┘ └───────────────────┘ └───────────────────┘
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Northern Represntative
Phra Sathit Thiraponno

Isan Represntative
Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun

Central Representative
Phrakhru Kanchonsutakhom

Southern Representative
Phrakhru Pladwonphon Thitikhuno

Regional Volunteer Teams

Anti-Smoking Project Coordinator
Thawatchai Chanchula

Appendix E

Phra Hen Phra Model Temples for the *Isan* area

Temple	Abbot	Activities Promoted
Wat Phothikaram, Roi Et province	Phrakhru Phothiwirakhun	The temple as a community center
Watpa Achiang, Surin province	Phrakhru Samuhan Panyatro	Thai elephant conservation
Wat Sakate, Roi Et province	Phra Athikan Wichian	"Dhamma and youth IT" (ICT Center)
Wat Thep Mongkhon, Amnat Charoen province	Phrakhru Mongkhon Worawat	*Phaendin Tham Phaendin Thong* leader
Wat Phonchai, Loei Province	Phra Sithithitonmethi	Traditional culture preservation
Watpa Chanthawonaram, Yasothon province	Phrakhru Sutalangkan	Curbing youth vice
Wat Asaromtham Thayat, Nakhon Ratchasima province	Phrakhru Amonchaikhun	Village and monastic health
Wat Sawang Arom, Ubon Ratchathani province	Phrakhru Sisutalangkan	The monk as an educational leader