

THE THAI-BASED *'BURMA MOVEMENT'*: UNDERSTANDING UNDERLYING DIVISIONS

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Abstract

This thesis explores the underlying dynamics of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*', before and after the game-changing 2010 election. In particular, it investigates the role of visible organisational divisions related to gender, ethnicity, and leadership disagreements, alongside differences in work styles and expectations related to international engagement. The Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' posed a puzzle insofar as the organisational fragmentation of rights-based groups did not necessarily align with the goals, forms of activism/operation, and strategies of what was internationally understood as the movement for change in Burma. Subsequently, analysis of the underlying tensions of ethnic-minority rights-based organisations, in their specific forms of engagement with influential international actors, was required to aid understanding of the particular dynamics, successes and failures of the movement.

The research builds on Bourdieu's tools of field, capital, habitus, and his reflexive methodological orientation, particularly in how these have been elaborated through Fligstein and McAdam's concepts of strategic action fields (SAFs), resources and social skills. Fieldwork was conducted through semi-structured interviews with activists from two ethnicities (Arakan and Pa-Oh) on the Thai-Burma border. Analysing their perspectives revealed two concurrent SAFs: one with a *United Burma* orientation, and another based on *Grassroots Nationalities*. Furthermore, these SAFs drew on two different orientations related to resource perspectives, the *Internationally-Influenced* versus *Community/Traditional-Influenced*. Ethnicity and gender were acknowledged as culturally-entwined influences on status and access to opportunities, but ultimately both served as components within an individual's outlook rather than as separate SAFs. Authority, leadership and social skills were also identified as key factors in the success or failure of initiatives, in alignment with the same SAFs and resource perspectives.

The research concludes that, while leadership and issue/ethnic/gender-related insularity were indeed important considerations, the identification of underlying, but divergent, perspectives related to SAFs, resources and applications of social skills ultimately offered greater explanatory insight.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASYC	All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress
AI	Amnesty International
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AYNG	Arakan Youth Network Group
BCUK	Burma Campaign UK
BMA	Burma Medical Association
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CPCS	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HURFOM	Human Rights Foundation of Monland-Burma
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KAN	Kyoju Action Network
KDNG	Kachin Development Networking Group
KNWO	Karenni National Women's Organization
KWO	Karen Women's Organization
LRC	Local Resource Centre
MWAF	Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
NSM	New Social Movement
NWI	Nobel Women's Initiative
PHR	Physicians for Human Rights
PYO	Pa-Oh Youth Organization
SGM	Shwe Gas Movement
SHRF	Shan Human Rights Foundation
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SWAN	Shan Women's Action Network
TBBC	Thai-Burma Border Consortium
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WLB	Women's League of Burma

INTRODUCTION

Initial Choices, Observations and Ideas

The central topic of this thesis is the Thai-based *'Burma Movement'*, specifically between 2007 and 2012, and the underlying factors and tensions that caused it to be less unified in practice than it appeared ideologically. This choice was motivated by six years of working directly with illegal migrants and unregistered grassroots organisations from Burma's ethnic-minority states, and the inadvertent discovery that they were significantly underrepresented; not just within the governance of their country, but in both scholarly analysis and popular media coverage. While there were a handful of articles related to the border situation and/or resettlement, notably Brees (2008; 2009) and Dudley (2007; 2010), these were more slanted towards refugee camps and issues around displacement. The border-based, but community-linked, activism organisations were largely ignored; while self-produced reports related their issues, with occasional (regional) news articles written to highlight their causes, practically no attention had been paid to their inter/intra-organisational dynamics and the personal perspectives/opinions of those actively involved.

Through engagement over an extended period of time, and learning to appreciate/be accepted within an extremely nuanced and clandestine context, it had become apparent that there was a considerable discrepancy between what international organisations, individual commentators, donors, aid agencies and governments assumed was required to improve the situation, and the appropriate ways in which they thought they should engage with it, compared to what the people who were directly involved actually felt was really needed. If there was an agreed mutual goal in a collaborative endeavour, it was apparently assumed that a common purpose would automatically also involve compatible perspectives and processes in execution. This lack of acknowledgement of different work styles, priorities and preferences would then invariably lead to conflict, frustration and ineffectiveness in implementation. As such difficulties were not seen as being of direct relevance to the issues that were being addressed, instead even being viewed as a sign of disrespect and lack of dedication towards them, operational problems would remain largely unreported and were, subsequently, perpetuated. Due to this lack of clarity and openness in communication, there seemed to be a distinct gap between what the groups actually felt they should be concentrating on, and the criteria/methods set by international donors outlining what they expected from them before they were willing to donate funds. Equally, there appeared to be an inexplicably large number of border-based groups dedicated to very similar issues, implying an underlying unease that then surfaced through organisational splintering, exclusivity, evasiveness, lack of collaboration and general disharmony in goals, objectives, leadership and followership.

The central puzzle, and the core question, ultimately then became how a supposedly united movement could be so fragmented in practice, and whether or not international involvement aided or exacerbated the situation. Specifically, whether the divisions in the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' were predominantly due to the visible self-segregations of ethnicity, gender and leadership, or other, potentially internationally-influenced, underlying factors and tensions.

Movement(s), Resources and a Unique Window of Opportunity

After years of observing and investigating both the output of the grassroots groups and the interventions of governments and international non-government organisations (INGOs), the basic key targets for change in Burma appeared to essentially be accepted by all those involved, both locally and internationally, regardless of ethnicity or their particular organisational focus. All concerned parties advocated for (or at least supported) free and fair elections; a constitution that did not enshrine military power; the release of political prisoners; laws that protected basic rights (BCUK, 2010); improved education, sanitation and healthcare (UNICEF, 2011); accountability for human rights abuses and corruption; fairer distribution of profits from resources and national assets (Earthrights, 2009); as well as trainings to raise awareness and skills so the people could become actively and meaningfully involved. Due to these universal goals, the assumption appeared to be (by the media, governments, donors, aid organisations etc.), that all of the '*Burma Movement*' organisations on the Thai-Burma border therefore essentially operated as part of a single conceptual relationship, or, to use Pierre Bourdieu's term, field. Any tensions or inefficiencies could then be attributed to relationship patterns and

struggles, such as maintaining tradition vs. embracing change, hierarchy vs. equality, quality of output vs. quantity of activities, personal aspiration vs. community obligation, and so forth.

On initial assessment, it appeared that the main divisions/self-segregations of Burma-related groups (border-based, inside and international) were primarily tied to their having organised themselves as much in relation to involuntary aspects (ethnicity, gender, age) as chosen interests (politics, human rights, environmental issues etc.), with the number of organisations seemingly also being related to splintering due to specialisation and/or disagreements in leadership. On further investigation, however, an alternative hypothesis was that the '*Burma Movement*' concept might be better understood through the suggestion that it was *not* composed of one umbrella field with a variety of subsections; the differences being fundamental rather than supplemental. Instead, it could perhaps be better conceptualised as representing two or more different ideological areas of interaction, each with their own distinct, largely incompatible, priorities and perspectives. These spaces of collective engagement were not theoretically constructed as delineated polar opposites, but could be roughly defined by identifying indicative criteria around the extremes of the spectrum; the specific objectives and priorities of each organisation and individual would then cause their relative positions to fall at different places across the continuum. For example, certain groups were working towards a united Burma, while others hoped for eventual ethnic-minority autonomy. Some felt change would come through the national government and policy level, with others were more focused on individual

communities or state-centric political concerns. Nationally-oriented perspectives could portray those from the ethnic-minority states as rebels or victims, obstructive to centralised concerns; ethnic-minority groups, due to the confiscation of their land and perceived marginalisation of their cultures, could frame the ethnic majority Burmans as oppressors. This division of opposing criteria could explain why what initially appeared to be a unified *'Burma Movement'*, seemingly with a single, universally-accepted (to use Bourdieu's term) habitus, could, in actuality, be fundamentally fragmented. This conceptual division of priorities and perspectives was not well understood beyond the groups themselves, with international donors seemingly assuming that the *'Burma Movement'* was an encompassing, inclusive term for all of those involved. This resulted in policies, funding criteria and expectations apparently being determined on the understanding that all Burma-related activities were aiming towards the same broad goals, and could therefore be compared, and mobilized, accordingly. As more nationally-driven activities made international engagement and media coverage a much higher priority, grassroots approaches could subsequently be overlooked by international policymakers, as well as by any donors who did not have a directly-engaged presence on the border.

Alongside speculation around discordant spaces of interaction, two dominant but conflicting positions in relation to resources (or, to use Bourdieu's term, capital) could also be hypothesised as being adopted by those involved within Thai-based organisations. Critically, these were *not* necessarily tied to the stated objectives or ethnic/gender/issue positions of the organisations or ideologies they belonged to, but instead related more to predominantly traditional vs. international perspectives.

Despite supposedly working in agreement, organisational leaders and staff could be viewing/addressing the same issues from opposing perspectives and valuing different physical, social and cultural resources, resulting in ineffectiveness, failed collaborations, and frustration for both organisations and donors alike. Although criteria from the opposing ends of the spectrum could be approximately defined, related resources remained even more fluid than the fields of engagement. The relative position held on the continuum could potentially differ not only between people and their organisations, but the same groups and individuals could vary their resource perspectives, and their application of social skills, when approaching different projects and issues. Divergences then related to the relative prioritising of various factors, including: international standards over traditional customs; formal qualifications over practical experience; awareness at the international/national level over the local; priorities being set by international donor stipulations over tangible needs; and whether organisations were distinct from, or extensions of, communities inside Burma.

What emerged was that holding a resource perspective that predominantly conformed with international stipulations, removed from the values and norms of traditional cultures, was essentially an unintentional construction of international support and (to a lesser extent) historically-inspired aspiration. To be able to obtain external support it became necessary for issues, concerns and needs to be framed in ways that were understandable to international parties. This included learning their language (literally and figuratively) and the social skills necessary to play the game according to their rules. The more their proposals, campaigns, and personal

behaviours aligned and resonated with the values and opinions of the donors, the more successful they would be in obtaining project funding, human resources, media coverage and policy-based support. In other contexts this could have represented little more than competitive business strategy, but the impact was amplified and distorted as those involved were not only (voluntarily or unavoidably) removed from their communities for extended periods, but were also dissociated from Thai culture. These new international perspectives could therefore appear to represent not only funding and personal betterment opportunities, but exciting ideological constants in a largely unpredictable world. Rather than just learning appropriate organisational, networking and fundraising techniques and skills, individuals could potentially shift their values away from their traditionally-influenced resource perspectives to either partially or dominantly embrace and adopt new internationally-influenced values and opinions, even though the stated issue(s) or identity-focus of the individuals and/or their organisations could remain unchanged. This prioritisation of international connections and/or relationships also carried with it the danger of distance and irrelevance. For example, there was the risk that internationally-savvy organisations or individuals could claim to be speaking on behalf of communities, but in actuality not really be communicating with or listening to them enough to be genuinely representative of their true needs, views, or concerns. This could then be considered a betrayal by communities, through the (actual or imagined) feeling that their issues and day-to-day realities were being ignored and/or exploited for reasons of (individual or organisational) financial gain, ego-inflation, personal advancement, and external ownership. Although those who possessed the social skills to present themselves in accordance

with internationally-recognised perspectives would appear to be more successful on the wider stage, at the community level such approaches could be seen as of limited practical value, potentially representing just another form of oppression, marginalisation and profiteering.

The practical research for this thesis took place during a brief but defining period in Burma's history. After half a century of military rule the country had finally, in November 2010, held (supposedly) democratic elections, raising both local and international expectations that change would finally be possible. The fieldwork was conducted in various places on the Thai-Burma border between late 2011 and early 2012, thus covering the few months in which power had been handed to the new government, but before any significant reforms had been implemented inside the country. Interviews completed in this short window therefore presented a fascinating insight into both the optimism and scepticism displayed when people, who had previously been oppressed by a military regime, could tentatively begin to consider whether or not they could now choose to return home. Significantly, at this particular time it was felt by the subjects (all of whom belonged to the Arakan and Pa-Oh ethnic-minority groups; use of particular terms/spellings explained in Chapter Six) that this decision would be theirs, as the funding and opportunities on the border were believed (at least in the short to medium term) to be relatively secure. Unbeknownst to the interviewees, over the subsequent months the positive international perception of government reforms would lead to the majority of funding being rapidly shifted away from the border, even though the political status(es) and livelihoods of those from the ethnic-minority states were largely

considered to be unchanged (NY Forum and SYCB, 2013). This made the position of many of the border groups untenable and effectively caused the border-based *'Burma Movement'* to collapse.

Hypothesising the existence of dual tensions between concurrent but incompatible strategic fields of action, alongside diverse and mismatched resource perspectives and the potential exploitation of social skills, provided an original conceptual framework for exploring the context. If supported by the empirical research, this could potentially offer significant insights into the views, motivations, misunderstandings and compromises of individuals and groups alike. These, in turn, would not only be interesting at an academic level, but could prove invaluable to any policy-makers, aid agencies, INGO workers or journalists attempting to understand and/or engage with Burma-related issues in the future. The aim of the field research was therefore to attempt to gather open, honest, multi-layered evidence from under-represented stakeholders that could, under analysis, help to either support or refute the suggested hypotheses. Additionally, it was hoped that the richness of the interview data could also aid the appreciation and understanding of other contributory factors that made the context so confusing to outsiders; in particular, the underlying importance of elements used by the participants for organisational self-segregation, such as ethnicity and gender, as well as the overarching issue of leadership.

Overview of Ensuing Chapters

The '*Burma Movement*', as well as the entire Thai-Burma border context, was complicated, intricate, and with definitive explanations far beyond the scope of a single thesis. If even a fraction of insight is to be presented then various surrounding factors and potential academic avenues have to be explored, before the interview data and theoretical choices can be meaningfully analysed, and conclusions drawn.

Accordingly, the next chapter gives an overview of the context and how there came to be a '*Burma Movement*' on the Thai-Burma border, before examining the opportunity for (and suitability of) external intervention, as well as some of the negative effects that have resulted from international involvement in other countries. Chapter Three then explores potential theoretical angles, including whether the '*Burma Movement*' could be classified using social movement theories. An outline is given of Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (1977) (and the associated concepts of habitus, capital and field), his call for reflexivity in research, then the contextual limitations of these tools are addressed through Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) utilisation of strategic action fields, resources and social skills. After Chapter Four explains the research methodology, design, ethics and implementation, in Chapter Five the question is raised as to whether the '*Burma Movement*' consisted not of one field of strategic action, but two conflicting arenas of engagement with divergent future aims (*United Burma* and *Grassroots Nationalities*). This is subsequently shown to be largely supported by the interview data, as are the two resource orientations of the *Internationally-Nationally Influenced* and the *Community-Traditional*, and the overarching relevance of social skills. The visible

self-segregations of ethnicity, gender and leadership are then investigated in Chapter Six, and are found to not only be consistent with, but secondary to, the field and resource hypotheses.

The conclusion is that, while ethnic, gender and leadership division were important considerations, the acknowledgement of divergent perspectives - of resources, fields of engagement, and the application of social skills - are ultimately of greater explanatory relevance when attempting to understand the underlying divisions that existed within the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*'. An epilogue then explains how, in the months following the field research, the '*Burma Movement*' effectively collapsed when international donors removed their financial backing in preference to supporting work inside the country. This shift in support to centralised operations essentially left many grassroots people in an uneasy limbo, but one that could still be more meaningfully addressed through an appreciation of the former border-based underlying perspectives.

BURMA, ETHNIC-MINORITIES, THE THAI-BURMA BORDER AND INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Introduction to the Context

Before being able to meaningfully investigate the workings, purpose and tensions of the Thai-based *'Burma Movement'*, a greater understanding of the situation is required. To establish why shared causes and/or backgrounds could not automatically be presumed to mean compatible goals and values, and the implications of such assumptions, the diverse range of entailed Burma-related positions, divisions and perspectives need to be identified and explained.

To understand the context as perceived by the interview subjects at the time of the research (between late 2011 and early 2012), this chapter first draws a picture of the country, and the people, before and around the 2010 election. In particular, the social and political ramifications of ethnic-minority representation and marginalisation are explored, including the two particular ethnic-minority groups to which the sample belonged, the Arakan and Pa-Oh. The Thai-Burma border

situation is clarified, from the perspective of both refugees and international aid, before defining the boundaries of the '*Burma Movement*'.

The role of external pressures, assumptions and perspectives on the success and coherence of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' are assessed, as well as the wider influence of non-government organisations (NGOs) in other contexts. The presence of INGOs and aid intervention within the country is acknowledged, alongside international trade sanctions and calls to hold the military accountable for human rights abuses. The probability of macroeconomic stability, and the place of the international community in drafting policies to support such an outcome, is discussed alongside international assumptions of, and media reports anticipating, substantial, sustainable in-country change in a post-election climate. We then move on to how international involvement can be welcomed more at the civil society rather than policy level, using international examples to illustrate how this may result in poorly executed initiatives, dependency, cultural distancing, and the prioritising of NGO agendas over local needs. The (limited) existing literature addressing the situation on the Thai border is examined, with parallels drawn with other countries through discrimination by gender, faith, the domination of donor agendas, and cycles of dependency and victimhood. Ultimately, instead of offering solutions or promoting self-reliance, international initiatives (and the resource-mobilization perspectives, field conjectures and capital assumptions informing them), are identified as significant factors when attempting to clarify why personal ambitions, and community independence, were not necessarily realised.

Overview of Pre-Election History and Ethnic-Minority/Burman Tensions

Although the particular focus of this thesis concerns the perspectives of ethnic-minority activists operating on the Thai-Burma border, it is important to first establish the wider Burma situation, and the various circumstances that caused the border-based movement to exist. When considering the historical context, there are several important points that are relevant for understanding the purpose of this study: how colonialism was eventually replaced by a military dictatorship; the significance of the country's name; the various attempts made in the pursuit of political democracy; the quality of life of the population; as well as, critically, the underlying tensions of a country whose ethnically-diverse population may not actually want it to function as a united whole.

Burma was granted independence from the British in 1948, although the government was subsequently overthrown by a coup in 1962; the military then continued as the dominant power (Fink, 2010) until the supposedly democratic election held in November 2010. Despite considerable natural resources, as well as strong production and export industries (teak, rice, gems, heroin etc.), decades of corruption led to the people of Burma becoming some of the poorest in Asia (BBC, 2013). Due to unreliable statistics it is impossible to accurately state the population size (estimates fall anywhere between 48 to 62 million), although the Burman majority largely reside in the seven central divisions, while the ethnic-minority groups are mainly spread throughout the seven ethnic-minority states (Fink, 2010). Their alternative histories, dissimilar religions, incompatible languages and distinct cultures (exacerbated by perceived differences being perpetuated down through

generations) have led to Burma being described not as a united country, but *'a portmanteau of diverse peoples joined artificially by history and politics'* (Tucker, 2001: 26).

The country's official name was changed (along with the flag and anthem) by the military government in 2010, without public consultation or explanation, to the 'Republic of the Union of Myanmar', having been the 'Union of Myanmar' since 1989. The name under British rule was 'Burma', becoming the 'Union of Burma' upon independence in 1948, then 'Socialist Republic of Burma' in 1974 (UNHCR, 2013). As the 'Myanmar' name was imposed by a military regime that assumed power via a coup rather than election, their authority to change the name of the country was not universally recognised, resulting in countries and official agencies varying in their usage (Vance, 2012). As the pro-democracy opposition's aim was to return the country to a state of independence, they typically favoured the pre-military 'Burma', as does this study. However, as 'Burmese' emerged through the research as perceived as synonymous with 'Burman', and thus exclusionary towards those of the various ethnic-minority cultural identities, it will not be used as a general term.

In 1988, the quasi-socialist military government that had ruled since 1962 was shaken by wide-scale student-led demonstrations, leading to martial law and the killing of thousands of protesters (ABITSU, 2007). Many of these '88 Generation' activists went on to become long-term political prisoners, or leaders in the exiled pro-democracy movement (BBC, 2007). The national election held in 1990, with the intention of cementing military power, was instead resoundingly won by opposition

party the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi. The government refused to recognise the result, imprisoning her and dozens of elected parliamentarians, with scores more fleeing the country (HRW, 2010). Although the military remained in power until 2010 they continued to be criticised and challenged, from both domestic and international angles, in regards to their political systems, socio-economic policies, human rights record and marginalisation of ethnic-minority engagement. However, due to the propensity for Burman-led activism groups to favour, and subsequently attract attention for, national campaigns on civil and political rights, the more localised cultural and social concentrations of ethnic-minority groups remained largely unknown and unacknowledged at the international level (Brees, 2009).

In 2007, a 500% overnight increase in the price of fuel sparked what has been dubbed the Saffron Revolution, where tens of thousands of monks took to the streets to protest on behalf of the people. Soldiers opened fire and hundreds of monks and civilians were beaten and arrested, to the condemnation of the international community (Boustany, 2007). The government was also heavily criticised the following year when Cyclone Nargis killed 200,000 and left 2 million homeless, yet the military refused to allow most humanitarian aid into the region. Their priority instead was going ahead with a referendum, itself widely dubbed a sham, which would enshrine their oxymoronic goal of a country that was democratic, but regimentally disciplined (Englehart, 2010). Under the (duly implemented) constitution, the military remains beyond government control and can assume power at any time if they feel that solidarity is under threat (BCUK, 2010).

The run-up to the 2010 election saw the government carefully plan and present the appearance of their willingness to embrace reform, although whether this commitment was genuine remained a point of conjecture.

Any belief that the regime was somehow “forced” to surrender power through a democratic transition – a view current among some Western governments – is clearly deeply misguided. Instead, the 2010 elections must be seen as the culmination of a top-down, managed transition to “discipline-flourishing democracy.” (Jones, 2013: 14)

The election rules prevented the inclusion of unregistered parties or any candidate holding a criminal conviction (ICG, 2010), thereby severely restricting involvement from existing activists. In the months prior, senior military officials began resigning their commissions to instead form political parties, allowing for further entrenchment of military control under a civilian guise (BCUK, 2010). In the final results, alongside allegations of coercion, violence and fraud, only 9% of seats were won by opposition parties (DVB, 2010). While international media reacted with virtual hysteria at Aung San Suu Kyi's subsequent release (Sherwell, 2010), and many world leaders and commentators adopted a somewhat self-congratulatory tone that their involvement had instigated change (BBC, 2010), the reality was that she was released only because she could not, according to their own laws, be detained any longer (McVeigh, 2010).

For the vast majority of people inside the country their quality of life was poor, both in urban and rural areas. While officially-recognised statistics were lacking, the

general pre-election situation was summarized by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) -

A third of Burma's people live on less than 30 cents a day. Ten percent do not have enough to eat, half of the country's 20 million children do not complete primary school, and 70% of people are at risk from malaria. (Alexander, 2008)

Aside from a lack of basic amenities, there were persistent allegations of human rights restrictions and violations. The military purportedly forced villagers, predominately in ethnic-minority areas, into slave labour, confiscated their land, pillaged and raped with no consequences, operating under an *'official policy of impunity'* (Pinheiro, 2009). Addressing issues proved difficult, both due to the isolation of the country and the refusal by the military government to admit there were any problems. When the government was obligated to consent to a United Nations Universal Periodic Review, the process was marked by their *'blanket denials of all serious human rights issues and false claims of improving the human rights situation and cooperating with the United Nations'* (HRW, 2011). For nearly three generations, Burma's population lived in an environment of oppression, where *'expressing fear brings no concrete advantages; it only brings closer to the surface that which Burmese people struggle every day to suppress'* (Skidmore, 2004: 57). Subsequently, it was a virtual inevitability that activism movements would emerge and attempt to free the country from military rule.

Given the history of uprisings being brutally suppressed, as well as the restrictions on travel, communication and assembly, establishing organisations within a

neighbouring country was a perfectly understandable and sensible reaction. Despite the risks involved in becoming illegal immigrants, residence elsewhere still provided greater opportunities to network, develop skills, raise awareness and work constructively towards changing the situation inside the country. However, this did not necessarily mean that all activists had the same goals or values, or were open to working collaboratively.

Central to the dynamics within the opposition movements, as well as to more general power relations inside the country, were the historically-entrenched divisions along ethnic-minority lines. Burma currently consists of seven regions (formerly districts) and seven ethnic-minority states. Although there is no reliable census information (AI, 2010), around 68% of the population is estimated to be Burman/Bamar (Burmese-speaking, Buddhist, principally residing in the Regions), 5% of non-indigenous descent, with the remainder belonging to various ethnic-minority groups (CIA, 2011). The seven states - Arakan (Rakhine), Chin, Kachin, Karen (Kayin), Karenni (Kayah), Mon and Shan - each named after the main ethnic-minority group in that location, are clustered around the borders and together constitute 57% of the total land area (CPCS, 2010). Although lacking their own states, there are also significant numbers of groups such as the Wa, Akha, Naga, Palaung, Lahu, Danu and Pa-Oh (Ekeh and Smith, 2007).

Ethnic territorialism could be considered as rooted in the initial mapping of Burma by the British in 1826, leading to outlying areas being classified as *'excluded'*, *'native'*, *'backward'* and later *'Frontier Areas'* under colonial rule (Gravers, 2007: 13).

Christian missionaries added an additional layer of division by converting some tribal peoples, resulting in Christian/Buddhist separations as well as those based on ethnic majority/minority (Gravers, 2007). The military government officially recognised a total of 135 different ethnicities within the country (AI, 2010), excluding Rohingya/Muslims and those of Chinese, Indian, Nepali and Anglo-Burmese descent. Estimates suggested that the real total was between 60 and 80 (CPCS, 2010), but a lack of general information, restrictions on mobility, reliable literature, censorship and government mistrust made it not only difficult to identify the exact figure, but served to highlight the wider issue of ethnic-minority people being unable to learn about the cultures of others (AI, 2010). As concluded in the CPCS 2010 ethnic-minority documentation report -

...ethnic groups are considerably unaware of the specific issues faced by each other. This may be attributed to constraints on interaction and the opportunity to come together and organise, and the lack of literature available on ethnic nationalities. (CPCS, 2010:106)

The expectation of ethnic-minority representation at the central political level, and the consequent resentment and defensiveness that emerged when it failed to materialize, can be traced back to the end of colonial rule. After World War II, the British government invited the leader of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), Aung San (father of Aung San Suu Kyi), to London to discuss Burma's transfer to independence. In February 1947, Aung San met with Shan, Kachin and Chin representatives and all signed the Panglong Agreement, agreeing to cooperate with an interim Burmese government. The intention was that this would ease the transition from colonial rule, under the ultimate understanding that *'full autonomy*

in internal administration for the Frontier Areas is accepted in principle' (Tucker, 2001: 122). While not all ethnicities, or even current ethnic-minority states, were involved in the Panglong Conference (Karen and Karenni participated only as observers, Mon and Arakan were excluded due to not being classified as 'Frontier Areas') (Gravers, 2007), nor were the specifics of post-transition government agreed (Tucker, 2001), the general spirit was accepted to be one of faith, trust and mutual benefit (Zo T. Humung, 2000). Following the AFPFL victory in the 1947 election, Aung San began to draft a constitution for a federal government system in accordance with the Panglong Agreement, but this hope came to an abrupt end one month later when he and his cabinet were assassinated by rebel paramilitaries (Tucker, 2001). The drafting was continued without any ethnic-minority participation, the final constitution eschewing federalism for a unitary system of centralised government control based on a framework of colonially-defined ethnic categorization (Gravers, 2007). A new constitution was implemented in 1974 that recognised the current seven ethnic-minority states, although the country continued to operate as a single-party state under Burman-dominated military rule. Following the 1988 uprisings, the ethnic-minority areas remained under central control, with progressively increasing levels of military presence (PHR, 2011). While the 2008 constitution ostensibly described Burma as a multi-ethnic, multi-party democratic state, it contained little provision or potential for ethnic autonomy or federal government (Zoya Phan, 2010). While allegedly enshrining every citizen's right to develop customs, arts and traditions, the constitution suppressed ethnic diversity by prohibiting anything that may be *'detrimental to national solidarity'* (BCUK, 2011a: 1). The final 2010 election results did show significant wins for some ethnic-minority

parties, but a majority was not achieved in any state; each party remained statistically insignificant at the national level (Transnational Institute, 2010).

From the outset of independence, where Burmans first enjoyed formalised majority rule, ethnic diversity has been perceived as being discouraged and suppressed in favour of '*Burmanization*'; the promotion of a unified Burmese culture (AI, 2010). Promoting the slogan of the Burmese army: '*One Blood, One Voice, One Command*' (BCUK, 2011a: 1), the military rulers implemented conscious policies to enforce compliance and assimilation, such as only recognising Buddhism as an official religion, Burmese the only language, and Burman cultural clothing as the national dress (CPCS, 2010). Within ethnic-minority areas, schools were only permitted to teach in Burmese, history books were Burman-centric (Zoya Phan, 2010), ethnic-minority traditions were discouraged, and representations in the media consistently subordinated the ethnic-minority nationalities (CPCS, 2010). There were also allegations that the population figures were manipulated to inflate the Burman majority (BCUK, 2010). Inter-ethnic divides were perceived as deliberately constructed/maintained to support discrimination, increase mistrust, and discourage alliances that could threaten majority rule. The extent, and bitterness, to which such measures were perceived was illustrated by the CPCS interview evidence (CPCS, 2010), where ethnic-minority people not only expressed negative perceptions of the government and soldiers (based on first-hand or generational experience), but also invariably extended these to members of Burman civil society (CPCS, 2010).

As the national government did not appear to respect the indigenous nationalities, the ethnic-minority people themselves took steps to ensure their issues were not completely overlooked. There was some documentation and analysis of human rights abuses within ethnic-minority areas, produced by ethnic-minority activism organisations and, occasionally, international agencies. Reports by ethnic-minority groups highlighted particular concerns for their people, including the environmental and community impacts of iron and coal mining to the Pa-Oh (PYO/KAN, 2011), dams across the Irrawaddy River in Kachin State (KDNG, 2009), as well as gas pipeline building in Mon State (HURFOM, 2009) and Arakan State (SGM, 2011). Each one contained accounts of forced labour, land confiscation, displacement, human rights abuses, environmental destruction and access to/profits from the sale of commodities only benefitting the government and neighbouring countries. Internal and external displacement was a significant issue, with around 140,000 in refugee camps on the Thai border and hundreds of thousands more living illegally in neighbouring countries (BMA *et al*, 2010).

There was criticism of the coverage of ethnic-minority issues, or lack thereof, by the international community, who were accused of concentrating almost exclusively on Aung San Suu Kyi, political agendas/elections, and events in Rangoon (Zoya Phan, 2010). While extensive coverage was given by international news networks to the 2007 Saffron Revolution and 2008 Cyclone Nargis, very little was written about Cyclone Giri hitting Arakan State in 2010, the famine within Chin State since 2006 (PHR, 2011) or the repeated military attacks on ethnic-minority civilians that had broken international laws (Zoya Phan, 2010). While the comparatively easy

journalistic access to Rangoon could partially account for this, and the relative relatability of urban concerns over rural, it could also have been tied to differences in respective priorities. Ethnic-minority groups would typically favour localised economic, social and cultural rights, while Burmans concentrated on more internationally-digestible and 'newsworthy' issues of civil and political rights (Brees, 2009). It was suggested that these opposing approaches, and the cycle of reporting ethnic-minority human rights abuses, served to perpetuate negative stereotypes of the ethnic-minorities as victims, as *'in the public realm they remained invisible except as symbols of Burmese military oppression'* (Brooten, 2003: 202). While for some this was yet another form of subjugation, for others it opened up considerable opportunities by improving their chances of being deemed eligible for refugee status. However, only a small percentage of those from Burma who arrived in Thailand considered themselves to be refugees; the border context, and individual motivations of those involved, was considerably more complex.

The Thai-Burma Border Situation and the *'Burma Movement'*

The circumstances on the border were characterized by the non-committal stance of the Thai government towards those who had arrived from Burma, the sheer volume and diversity of legally insecure groups that then emerged there, and how uncertainty about situations back inside the country only further entrenched ethnic and organisational fragmentation.

Thailand does not officially recognise the term *'refugee'*, or have domestic legislation specifically relating to the rights of legitimate asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2009).

Instead, those who crossed the border were deemed illegal migrants, or, depending on the circumstances, classified as Externally Displaced Persons (EDPs) or *'temporarily displaced persons fleeing from fighting'* (Brees, 2008: 5); they were considered transitory and, as such, were expected to return to their own country as soon as conditions were conducive. Although makeshift border camps had been documented since 1976 (Brenner *et al*, 2008), incomers from Burma were not recognised for formalized assistance until 1984. According to the Thai-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), a syndicate of INGOs offering assistance in and around the camps, border offensives destroyed more than 3600 villages between 1996 and 2010, displacing more than one million; subsequently, at the time of the election, over 141,000 people from Burma were resident in the nine designated camps (TBBC 2011). Additionally, nearly 65,000 people had been resettled since 2006; the vast majority to the US, but with significant numbers also being accepted in Australia, Canada and Nordic countries (TBBC, 2010).

Aside from the official camp figures, there were also estimated to be 200,000 EDPs living outside of camps, as well as over 2 million (official and unregistered) migrant workers (TBBC 2011). Their stated reasons for leaving Burma could be divided into three broad categories – conflict, economic, and to pursue education and/or follow family (Green *et al*, 2008). While a combination of factors was common, in accordance with previously identified Burman/ethnic-minority differences, those from ethnic-minority states were found to be more likely to give conflict/violence/displacement as the key reason, while for the majority of Burmans it was economic (Green *et al*, 2008). Migrant workers played an important role in

supporting their home communities via remittances, with estimates suggesting that the value sent annually was at least equal to the amount received by the country in overseas development aid (Brees, 2009). Similar to the dependency cycle within the camps, this could create reliance and circumvent the real issues within the country by easing the responsibility of the government (Turnell *et al*, 2008). In addition to the taxation the military government could impose on legitimate migrant workers (Brees, 2009), an extensive network of traders, manufacturers, spies, loggers and smugglers had a vested interest in ensuring that conflict, and the associated migrant labour, continued along the border (Brees, 2009; South, 2006).

A bewildering array of support organisations were present on the Thai side of the border, from field offices of international agencies down to tiny (but still internationally-led) NGOs, all engaged in offering some combination of Thai-based and/or cross-border aid, basic services, practical assistance, training, research, advocacy, and legal or financial support. While people from Burma could make up a considerable percentage of their staff, with projects determined and implemented collaboratively, their organisational objectives and processes were ultimately rooted in international perspectives and donor influence/obligations; unlike community-based organisations (CBOs), their work was primarily on behalf of people from Burma, rather than led by them. INGOs and government agencies (e.g. USAID, Open Society Institute, National Endowment for Democracy) could have considerable financial resources, making them able to cover substantial expenses such as the running costs of schools, health facilities, offices, major project grants, internship programs, trainings/conferences, research publications, fellowships etc. Some

organisations worked both inside and outside the camps (e.g. Jesuit Refugee Service, ZOA Refugee Care), while others worked in combination with grassroots partners to provide essential services (e.g. World Education and Burmese Migrant Workers' Education Committee). There was also a wide variety of minor NGOs, founded/run by concerned individuals, offering small-scale community assistance, personal support or individual scholarships (e.g. We Women Foundation, The Branch Foundation). Others were more involved in human resources, supplying experienced internationals (to share skills, offer advice, run trainings)(e.g. VSO, American Jewish World Service) or coordinating willing short-term volunteers who were capable of offering practical support (English teaching, research and editing etc.)(e.g. Burma Volunteer Program, university-affiliated internships); remuneration ranged from international consultancy fees and salaries, to local stipends, to unpaid. These individuals were not to be confused with the succession of unaffiliated volunteers and (legitimate or self-styled) journalists, researchers, filmmakers, photographers, writers and freelance humanitarians who were also ubiquitous in border areas.

INGOs could play an essential role in obtaining funds that were difficult to secure by, or unavailable to, unregistered people and organisations; although this carried its own problems of allowing them to potentially set the agenda and/or be awarded grants in preference to grassroots groups. This became a key concern for many organisations; as summarized by (renowned border-based migrant health service provider) the Mae Tao Clinic:

INGOs have inherent advantages we can't compete with, like infrastructure and knowledge of the auditing process that community-based groups won't ever have. There's a real tension between [international organizations'] approach to the issue and how they fund initiatives on the border. (Counterpoint, 2011)

Due to the financial crisis, the sustainability of international funding became precarious; for example, USAID, a key donor to cross-border projects, saw their operations budget cut by \$39 million in 2011, with a recommendation to cut foreign assistance by 44% by 2016 (Provost, 2011). Aid to the border was additionally significantly threatened by the immediately-anticipated improvement of circumstances inside Burma post-election (Wade, 2011). For example, in 2011 the UK doubled their aid and became one of the highest donors to Burma, with a shift towards promoting working with civil society groups based inside the country rather than those in border areas or wider exile (BCUK, 2011b). Reactions to this ranged from being dismissed by London-based Burma academic Maung Zarni as '*delusional*' and '*fork-tongued and schizophrenic*' (Wade, 2011), to the sentiment being applauded but with calls for an additional 300% increase in support to border areas (BCUK, 2011b). However, numerous border-based organisations went far beyond receiving aid and providing essential services, as many were also taking active roles in working towards civil and political change inside the country.

Emerging from (and intrinsically intertwined with) all of the above was what was colloquially dubbed the '*Burma Movement*'; an extensive network of initiatives that supported and/or advocated for the people of Burma and worked towards creating positive change within the country, typically founded and/or run by the people

themselves. This definition therefore excluded any detached academics, political analysts or international activists who lacked direct practical connections and/or irrefutable personal investment. *'Burma Movement'* initiatives existed in various forms, with different priorities, in several countries and – when safe to do so – within the country itself. Being based elsewhere was largely a necessity rather than a choice; *'As there is no freedom of speech or political organisation inside Burma, the safest way to reveal the human rights violations inside the country and engage in some kind of opposition is to flee the country'* (Brees, 2009: 33).

There was a distinction between the two forms of wider engagement, which could roughly be divided into those who were (or would like to be) still directly involved inside Burma but were currently based (fully or partially) in a border country (*grassroots*), and those who had legally resettled in third countries and could use their newfound stability and freedom of speech to advocate for change (*exile*). While international advocacy and human rights organisations helped to raise awareness of the situation in Burma to those in other countries, including various Burma Campaigns (UK, US, New Zealand, Australia, Japan etc.) or the Amnesty International *'3doms – Three Freedoms for Burma'* campaign (signifying *'expression, association, assembly'*) (AI, 2011), these groups remained distinct from remote organisations founded by diaspora. Exile communities could use the freedom of being physically beyond the military's power to raise awareness about situations within the country, using print media, online news, radio and television to reach internal and external communities alike. Activities could be both direct (aimed at instigating change within Burma) and indirect (persuading host countries and

international bodies to take action on Burma's behalf)(Brees, 2009). Although essentially working towards the same end, the activities, perspectives and habitus of exile communities were very different to the grassroots groups, as *'the 'long-distance nationalist' in exile from Burma has... little price to pay for the possible effects of his or her actions'* (Dudley 2003: 22), with theirs essentially being *'occasionally a separate struggle'* (Dudley 2003: 22) from those working in direct proximity. Taking a cynical view, this physical detachment from the issues could actually lead to exiled involvement being counterproductive by *'holding on to strident, uncompromising rhetoric'* (Brees, 2009: 40) or just being irrelevant, by ultimately having *'little impact on what happens inside the nation'* (Dudley 2003: 22). As the aim was to gain insight into those who were actively engaged on the border, and were intending to return rather than resettle, it subsequently became necessary for the practical research to only focus on those who belonged to groups that fell under the grassroots definition.

While activities and operations could occur in other bordering countries, the majority of grassroots groups were based in Thailand. Organisations ranged from having large staff numbers, well-equipped offices, considerable funding and international reputations (e.g. Women's League of Burma) down to informal collectives of only a handful of people (e.g. Zomi Student and Youth Organization). A small percentage (e.g. Peaceway Foundation, Human Rights Education Institute of Burma) were legally registered with the Thai government, but the majority, along with most of their members, were not. Depending on funding, organisational positions might involve a salary, subsistence-level stipend, or no remuneration

whatsoever. Particularly in the latter two circumstances, it was common for people to live in their offices, or if a very small organisation, to be run from a member's home. This situation led to genuine concerns about security, resulting in a reticence around talking about their activities publicly, or involving people who were not already known (or vouched for) by a current insider. It also led to an unorthodox allocation of organisational roles; jobs could not be openly advertised, resulting in a level of compromise wherein roles would be filled by whoever was willing to consider taking the position (which may or may not be finalised by vote), rather than being able to choose whoever had the most appropriate skills or experience.

Groups divided themselves along the lines of ethnicity, age, gender, political affiliation, issue-focus or a mixture of the above. Each engaged in some combination of practical activities, activism, awareness-raising initiatives, training and general support for their own membership and/or communities, either solely within Thailand or alongside work inside Burma. Some, such as the Karenni Student Union, operated wholly (within Thailand) inside the camps. The impact of the grassroots activities could be much more organic and unassuming than the lofty stated goals of radical political change. Formal and informal education on leadership, capacity-building, gender equality and human rights could become gradually absorbed and internalised by individuals and, in turn, their organisations and communities. At a more practical level, trainings in skills such as photography, filmmaking and journalism were increasingly applied to expose the realities inside the country (Brees, 2009), with the aim of refuting the propaganda of the military and forcing them to act (albeit not necessarily positively). Most organisations collaborated to

some extent with other groups of similar objectives and focus, with involvement in multiple networks resulting in considerable overlap. Even when not officially affiliated, organisations could work collaboratively for particular projects, one notable example being the Global Campaign on Burma's 2010 Military Elections, which was implemented and endorsed by over 150 different organisations (Burma Digest, 2010).

Aside from organisations led by people from Burma, there were also Burma-centric alliances and solidarity networks where other nationalities supported the people of Burma in addressing their causes, rather than dissociately working (supposedly) on their behalf. Groups could also make themselves visible at regional and international levels by acting as the Burma representative in region-wide collectives. The level of coordination and engagement was substantial, covering everything from providing shelter for trafficked ethnic-minority women and children, up to advocating in the international arena. This could be a double-edged sword; while such varied involvement was acknowledged as impossible for community leaders within the country, when externally-instigated activities supported (or alleged to speak on behalf of) internal communities there was also an extent to which they removed their power. If positive recognition fell to outside assistance, the authority of community leaders (as well as the military) was challenged, creating an imbalance that could itself carry political, cultural and social consequences in the longer term (Brees, 2009).

Objectively, there could be little doubt that the '*Burma Movement*' (in all its forms) did succeed in having a substantial impact by providing awareness, services, opportunities and hope to an otherwise frustrating and seemingly hopeless situation. However, although the desire to (at least appear to) be collaborative was evident, the sheer volume of organisations working on the border did not so much highlight the number of issues being addressed, as indicate extreme levels of fragmentation, duplication and incompatibility. Clearly, the common objectives (freedom and democracy in Burma; equal legal, human and gender rights; access to education and basic services etc.) were not in themselves sufficient for groups to work harmoniously together and/or amicably merge their operations; fragmentation and segregation appeared to be engrained (Brees, 2009). Democratic goals and dedication accepted, the reality of the border context served as an illustration of the post-colonial observation of Burma as '*a medley, for they mix but do not combine*' (Furnivall, 1956: 304).

So while what the groups were trying to do was well documented, and why, what was absent from the news reports and self-produced literature was an insight into how culture(s) influenced their views, the values motivating them, and the impact these could have on the ability of individual organisations (and the '*Burma Movement*' as a whole) to succeed. An analytical approach to the wider international perception of Burma, or at least an appreciation of alternative perspectives, was subsequently required.

External Perspectives, INGO Engagement and Political/Economic Analysis

Having already examined the intended public image and advocacy output of those involved in the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' at the grassroots level, it became necessary to establish the additional factors that may have impacted on their operations, outlooks and aspirations. More specifically, were outside forces potentially preventing the movement from becoming coherently unified, or were external parties misunderstanding and misrepresenting the context by presuming such an intention was, or should be, present? Aside from the more obvious areas of assistance, such as providing aid to those who were left homeless through military action and natural disasters, it was not yet clear whether the various external interventions and policies were actually helping to address Burma's issues beyond temporary and/or superficial levels. It was even possible that they could have been hindering progress, and/or distorting the situation for their own ends, consistent with the result of (some) international interventions in other developing nations. Rather than helping to heal the rifts within the directly-engaged movement(s), the inclusion by external parties of particular stipulations, conditions, or the placement of undue emphasis on their own opinions and priorities, could actually have been a major cause of organisational mission drift and/or the (potentially unproductive) altering of the personal values and ambitions of involved individuals. It then became necessary to establish what interventions had already been attempted/achieved, how these had been interpreted, and how they compared with similar situations in other countries.

INGOs and international agencies (e.g. UNICEF, World Food Program) had been able to work inside Burma since the 1990s, but were severely restricted in their operations, travel, areas of engagement and choice of authorised partners (Miley, 2008). The difficulty of their involvement was then exacerbated by being both obstructed by the military and criticised by the international community for being perceived as supporting the regime (Dudley, 2003). Subsequently the majority of international influence on, and analysis of, Burma became based more on trade and politics than practical engagement.

Making an accurate assessment of Burma's pre-election national economy was difficult, due to poor or outdated data, lack of domestic or international banking statistics, unreliable government information, and unstable rates of exchange and inflation. In relation to legal and human issues, despite grave concerns expressed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010, during the 2011 Universal Periodic Review with the Human Rights Council the government rejected 16 individual proposals requesting action in relation to the investigation of crime and adherence to international law (BCUK, 2011a). There were calls for Commissions of Inquiry to the International Criminal Court and International Labour Organization, as well as for a referral to the International Court of Justice in relation to forced labour. Such avenues were not explored, as opinion remained divided over whether internal issues should instead be addressed through domestic, rather than international, judicial mechanisms. Also, without clear consequences, the mere disapproval of developed nations and international agencies appeared to have minimal impact (Mathieson, 2010). However, critics alleged that the international community had a

responsibility to investigate crimes against humanity as Burma's judicial system was fundamentally and irreparably flawed, due to a history of unaccountability, the military only being responsible to itself, and with officials operating within a culture of systematic impunity (Burma Lawyers Council, 2011). Such a split was representative of the division of international opinion in regards to the appropriate methods and perspectives to adopt in relation to Burma's situation.

Prior to the election, countries varied in their responses to the military regime, including imposing sanctions and/or supplying humanitarian aid. How effective these various measures were was always a matter of debate, with detractors saying they: served to harden the resolve of the junta; increased government-manipulated cronyism by enhancing the reliance of business upon the state (Jones, 2013); led to mass unemployment; and enabled China to become the key partner for trade and the supply of arms (Turnell, 2011). While sanctions helped to restrict the potential for military profit, they also denied the people access to international financial institutions, caused considerable job losses amongst the general population (Brees, 2008), and prevented the emergence of a professional and business class (FT, 2010). There is also the argument that sanctions were essentially about ego and sanctimony, being manufactured mainly so that those who were imposing them could feel, and make a show of being, useful and important without any real understanding of the situation; *'The idea that U.S. pressure could serve the high moral purpose of bringing democracy to Burma/Myanmar was a fantasy that did not acknowledge the country's serious problems'* (Englehart, 2010: 10). In practice, the sanctions did not effectively curtail the junta, therefore the threat that they would

not be removed unless there were clear signs of progress was rendered largely meaningless. Also, the generals then fell into a cycle of blaming everything that went wrong inside the country on Western powers, with Aung San Suu Kyi noting that eventually *'The regime started believing their own propaganda, that sanctions are responsible for the ills of the country'* (quoted in Keller, 2012).

Within Asia the perspectives on how best to handle Burma's military regime were different, with neighbouring countries, notably India, Thailand and China, gradually establishing thriving trade links. While not necessarily allies of the junta, neighbouring countries had a vested interest in turning a blind eye to the human rights impacts of lucrative mining, logging, gas, oil and hydropower industries (Wade, 2010). In 2009, the *Asia Society* coordinated a taskforce of Asian countries to establish their standpoints on Burma and, specifically, US sanctions, spurred by the suggestion that *'some observers believe that the situation has been exacerbated by conflicting signals and uncoordinated policy responses from regional and international actors'* (Asia Society, 2010: 3). While Western countries had had the luxury of being able to impose harsh sanctions without directly impacting upon themselves, ASEAN countries voiced concern that they could be expected to absorb the consequences if Burma politically imploded (Jones, 2008; 2009). There was also a consensus that, due to human rights concerns and the disenfranchisement of large sections of the population from the political process, regional and international humanitarian aid should continue or be increased. Although change was acknowledged as needing to be internally led, there was a common *'concern about the lack of a cohesive international strategy to deal with Burma/Myanmar and to*

coordinate activities designed to encourage political and economic reform' (Asia Society, 2010: 6). Most of the taskforce country reports subsequently encouraged the facilitation of INGOs and foreign experts, especially within the education system.

Consequently, a discordant range of international opinions were voiced, many dissenting and suggesting/demanding political change and the end of human rights violations. However, the lack of coherence and international authority meant that, ultimately, disapproval, sanctions and calls for action amounted to little more than empty rhetoric that the junta could, and did, ignore. This ineffectiveness helped to underscore the reasoning behind the need to establish a grassroots *'Burma Movement'* on the border, as exiled groups, campaign organisations and international governments had (whether or not they acknowledged or even realised it) proven to be largely unsuccessful.

Perspectives on Post-Election International Involvement

Following the 2010 election, the enthusiasm of international senior officials to visit the country, and groups of investors to become involved, led to Burma being described as emerging as *'a new darling of the West'* (Köhler, 2012: 1). However, scepticism was raised about whether the *'about-face of Western powers is a genuine commitment to supporting peace and democratic reforms'* (Köhler, 2012: 1), or instead was more representative of an awareness that Western powers had been missing out on the lucrative benefits of Burma's abundant natural resources. The International Crisis Group asserted that the country's future success *'depends on ensuring macroeconomic and political stability'* (ICG, 2012: 20) while advocating a

country-led approach. The International Monetary Fund's 2012 report on the country concluded that the *'top priority is to establish macroeconomic stability beginning with exchange rate reform'* (IMF, 2012: 2), with an emphasis on the need for appropriate pacing, improved transparency and developed infrastructure; seen as necessitating the assistance of international financial institutions, including themselves. While economic and political reforms were acknowledged as being vulnerable to the similarly adverse effects of deregulation and privatization previously experienced by countries of the former Soviet Union, many international opinions assumed the solution would come from international involvement, or through the local adoption of international policies and economic theories. However, there were also warnings to exercise caution and not assume that systems alone would provide the answers.

Reform will not simply succeed if the right policies or institutions are put in place, because even "good" institutions remain subject to broader social power relations (Jones, 2013: 3)

Alternative political economic analysis of the 2011 fiscal situation and monetary policies concluded that, due to the lack of infrastructure and solid underlying institutions, *'macroeconomic policymaking in Myanmar is not just ill-conducive to sustained economic growth, but is hampering Myanmar's prospects'* (Turnell, 2011: 149). While superficial changes were possible at that time, the prospect of meaningful reform discussions was not yet present, let alone in progress. In 2008, economic professor Tin Soe's analysis was not only critical of past economic plans and policies, but of the entire approach of the policy-makers. He asserted that the

vast natural resources were not the country's key asset, but that *'Myanmar's most valuable resource is its people'* (Tin Soe, 2008: 14); therefore the route to overcoming corruption, improving physical, economic and social institutions, and developing policies, was for policy-makers to urgently adopt an improved mindset in relation to recognising human capabilities. Post-election research conducted with local civil society organisations inside Burma also reflected the fears that international involvement within the country would ignore the voices and needs of grassroots people, as well as overlook development issues learned in other countries, by ploughing ahead with ill-conceived economic strategies -

Many local leaders are fearful that lessons learned in other nations in transition will be overlooked as donor countries seek to gain the consent of the government and quickly put in to use their allocated funds (LRC, 2012: 9)

The politics of Burma have been described as *'singularly Manichean'* (Englehart, 2010: 10), simplistically interpreted as military = bad, democracy = good. International governments and activists drew themselves willingly into the pre-election conflict, *'imagining themselves champions of a democratic opposition'* (Englehart, 2010: 10) seemingly under the naive assumption that the government was all that was wrong; therefore a regime change would fix all the problems and the best way for this to be realised would be through exerting international pressure. Such perspectives completely disregarded entrenched ethnic, gender, environmental and human rights issues and abuses, all of which were of more serious and immediate impact to the people than their civil or political rights. They also assumed that all military operations and personnel were anti-democratic,

oppressive and malevolent. This not only ignored that much of the domestic skills-base was held by those who had had access to superior military education and training opportunities, but that full democratic transition would likely require military support if civil war was to be avoided. Without it, the resulting power vacuums would likely be filled by local political bosses and military officials, as occurred before the 1962 military coup. These, in turn, could lead to a weak centralised government, and limit the potential for genuine democratic ascendancy, by allowing local power to take precedence over the legal rights of the people (Englehart, 2010).

An international consensus regarding Burma was never reached, resulting in a lack of coherent strategies or policies, with international supporters being dismissed as well-wishers who were *'well-meaning, but wholly misguided'* (Maung Zarni, 2006). Internal and independent critics viewed many official Western perspectives as unrealistic and intransigent, lacking any real understanding of the country's culture, history or the *'deep antagonism between the pro-West opposition, as personified by Aung San Suu Kyi, and the regime'* (Maung Zarni, 2006). Prior to the election, various economists stressed the importance of the need for international restraint in regards to future dealings with Burma. An understanding of the political economy would be vital if mistakes from other floundering post-conflict reconstructions were to be avoided, where *'aid agencies and other external players seeking to help ignored or discounted the power of individuals and groups with a vested interest in the status quo'* (Rieffel and Gilpin, 2010: 5). Critically, the capacity-building needs of those within the country would have to be placed before policy, the involvement of

international experts, and their related assumptions of what would/should be valued in the context, as *'vast amounts of money will be wasted, and troublesome social problems will be created if foreign aid investment leads capacity-building instead of following it'* (Rieffel and Gilpin, 2010: 4). Instead of following the typical route of dismissing Burma's pre-election economy as hopelessly mismanaged, there was also a gradual increase in the noting of internal economic prowess, including inflation coming down and deficits being controlled. Although systems were still considered to be deeply flawed, they were not necessarily the *'kleptocratic caricature'* (Gupta, 2010) of typical Western rhetoric. While advocating a revision of US sanctions, international agencies were also warned to tread carefully during the reform process, as -

...festooning this path with multi-step conditionalities, finely targeted support, plethora of best practice norms and excessive non-economic considerations is only likely to end up collapsing this process upon itself (Gupta, 2010)

So while there was evidence that the situation was complex, with various factions calling for economic caution, there was no agreement as to how the national government or international parties should proceed. Subsequently, there was a danger that Burma could experience similar problems as other countries in democratic transition, particularly in how/if they chose to accept external offers of financial and political assistance.

Issues with International Policies and the Ethos of NGOs

At a country's policy and government level, refusing international offers of help is not uncommon. The alternative approach is to allow international engagement within communities, although external involvement in strategy and procedure may be seen as intrusive and undesirable by ruling governments. While the provision of aid can save lives in times of crisis, there are also potentially negative effects and perceptions involved when emerging nations welcome an international presence to assist with the development of their civil society. The general idea of community development can be interpreted as the entwining of conservative strategies for sustainable community responsibility with progressive strategies for increasing the development of democracy from the people up (Stubbs, 2006), although an alternative process has also emerged; '*NGOization*', involving movements and organisations which emphasize *'issue-specific interventions and pragmatic strategies with a strong employment focus, rather than the establishment of a new democratic counter-culture'* (Bagic, 2004: 222). While there are a great many publicized stories of NGOs successfully building schools, vaccinating children and supplying villages with clean water, there are also significant issues related not so much to the issues they address, but to the failings of their processes, methods and attitudes.

Stubbs (2006) used the example of Croatia in the late 1990s, where the country became overrun with overlapping and competing commissions, committees, institutes and agencies dedicated to drafting strategies and overseeing projects. All

seemed strong on paper, but in reality often displayed a serious disconnection between top-down policy and community-up development initiatives.

Any attempt to trace a rational or logical sense of ownership or steering of any particular issue is almost bound to end in failure amidst this proliferation of bodies and actors, often themselves complexly relating to more permanent bodies and more ephemeral networks and groups (Stubbs, 2006: 2)

Donors could be erratic, sacrificing long-term strategies in favour of check-boxing popular issues, and U-turning policies to appeal to topical trends. The perspectives of local participants and activists could become skewed, as real concerns and the potential for practical engagement were buried under rhetoric, jargon and idealistic circumlocution. Themes could be defined narrowly with little connection between related issues, illustrated through a preponderance of 'big ideas' discussions rather than strategically integrated local development programmes (Sampson, 2002). Agencies could end up engaging more in competition than cooperation, resulting primarily in confusion rather than productivity (Stubbs, 2006). One other aspect in Croatia was the assumption that community volunteering was an innovative concept brought from the United States, ostensibly designed to move the people away from aid dependency but actually used to allow large bodies to unduly influence small community initiatives, thus exhibiting *'little or no understanding of the longstanding tradition of community development in Croatia'* (Stubbs, 2006: 10).

As the Croatian example illustrates, the well-meaning, but often culturally insensitive, assumptions and approaches of NGOs could not only be ineffective or

misjudged, but could actually end up causing lasting harm to the existing communities. Similarly, Elbers and Arts' (2011) study of donor/NGO interactions in India and Ghana noted that, when donor conditions were unworkable (according to local cultures, perceptions, skills etc), NGOs could resort to constructing a paper reality to manipulate donors into believing their assumptions and expectations were indeed correct. Alternatively, the focus on upwards accountability could genuinely impact on the perceived importance of community connections and authenticity, effectively creating distance and eroding the very factors that had made the NGOs attractive partners in the first place. Additionally, in her assessment of small-scale neoliberal development programs implemented by INGOs and development workers in Cairo, Elyachar (2005) argued that their implementation styles, alongside the promotion of international ways of thinking, encouraged a shift in cultural and personal values amongst participants that not only failed to address the existing problems, but actually resulted in them experiencing social and economic dispossession by no longer feeling they 'belonged' anywhere.

While little attention was paid to the mechanisms and values of border-based Burma activism organisations, there had been some academic interest in those classed as refugees, both through their lives in the camps and their experiences of resettlement. Brough *et al* (2012) concluded that a more productive perspective for Burma refugee narratives than a trauma/resilience continuum would be one of reflexivity - in which there is an increased willingness to learn from, rather than just categorize, those who have been oppressed - but that international perspectives were not currently conducive. Horstmann (2011) and Dudley (2007) noted that

ethnic-minority nationalities who had embraced Christianity became more favoured by international faith-based donors, due to perceived kinship in relation to their values. Zeus (2011) commented on the considerations of providing higher education in the camps and the associated potential for offering hope and self-actualization. Such initiatives could then also lead to disempowerment by available subjects being manipulated to fit the desires of donors rather than students, with continued international support seen as dependent on the perpetuation of their appearance as victims. Demusz (1998) considered that the most significant barrier to Thai-Burma border refugee and migrant worker assistance networks moving from relief/aid to a development orientation was a lack of commitment (from multiple sides) to approaches that involved wider discussion and local participation. All considered that entrenched forms of traditional, patriarchal, elitist leadership in the camps constituted a significant barrier for effective, sustainable, individual and collective development. All suggested that perhaps international perceptions of what the problems were, and what was required to address them, may not have been accurate, and that international policy may actually have been responsible for perpetuating the cycle of aid dependency. Those within the camps were left with very narrow options and were effectively forced to continue to appear helpless, partly because no other options were available, but also due to fear that failure to conform to the 'victim' stereotype may lead to international support being withdrawn. Therefore -

...the problem is not simply a failure to recognize that refugee self-governance exists, but a perception that where it does exist it is in competition with or even threatening to international ideals and norms (McConnachie, 2012: 35)

In effect, international interventions that were supposed to protect the rights and basic needs of refugees, providing food and shelter but also promoting their well-being and independence, could actually end up being prioritised above the ideas and concerns of the people themselves. Rather than being the solution, international perspectives could instead become the primary barrier which prevented goals of self-reliance from being realised; carrying significant implications if camp residents then chose, or were coerced, to return to Burma.

Taking a global view, international NGO and agency involvement at community levels can, potentially, be detrimental in numerous ways. As local/INGO partnerships often run parallel to state initiatives, high levels of funding and humanitarian aid can create a culture of unsustainable dependency, with those at the community level becoming reliant on support removed from government welfare systems. At an administrative level, those who work with international groups can find that the insistence/inclination towards implementing practices in accordance with their own conventions (regulations and routines, reporting/monitoring/evaluating, results-driven targets), can alter the perspectives and approaches of established community organisations.

The imposition of rules of the 'new public management' with its emphasis on particular organisational structures, including a US-style management hierarchy, as well as on structures of efficiency, effectiveness and measurable results, has distorted and inhibited grassroots innovative practices (Stubbs, 2006: 10)

Rather than being led by the state or the determinations of individuals, the agendas of NGOs can effectively be used to manipulate the perspectives and approaches of those involved by making the provision of financial assistance dependent on their willingness to conform to predetermined methods and priorities. Whether intentional or inadvertent, *'pressure from donors has changed the working styles of many organisations'* (Bagic, 2004: 222). Specifically, civil society groups inside Burma stated that donor agendas and expectations, particularly in relation to forming partnerships and networks, could inadvertently exacerbate underlying problems -

Pressure to collaborate can result in the development of inauthentic partnerships born, not out of shared interest or consensus, but external financial or programming pressure. For the long-term, fragmentation that already exists in Myanmar society can worsen, further comprising the activity engagement of civil society. (LRC, 2012: 16)

International attempts to shoehorn unfamiliar approaches into new situations - and report back with tangible, coherent, successful results - can lead to a reliance on some of the same techniques that the international agencies claim to be reforming; taking shortcuts, an emphasis on the number of trainings conducted as opposed to evidence of actual learning, or relying on existing networks of influence. All of this then needs to be hidden from the key donors so as not to jeopardize future funding potential, ironically making initiatives that were (in part) set up to tackle issues of transparency then also suffer from the same problems (Bagic, 2004).

If international development money becomes available then there is the potential for the emergence of a sector composed of professional NGOs. Due to their own

priorities these will likely be based in urban areas, conforming to the inverse trend that NGOs will end up being concentrated where they are needed least (Stubbs, 1997). Their fields of engagement can then be both geographically and thematically tailored to relate to donor interests, as opposed to what the actual communities, grassroots researchers, local governments etc. have identified as their actual needs. These organisations therefore typically display an overemphasis on opinion, analysis and international visibility, rather than practical engagement at the community level. Subsequently they can cause more harm than good, by using top-down approaches in their dealings with the civil societies they claim to represent, using tokenism to make it easier to push through their own agendas, or not consulting with the communities at all. These NGOs then also have to compete with each other for the same funding opportunities, leading to mistrust, lack of coordination, repetition of tasks and overlapping of activities.

One strategy to avoid such issues is the formation of urban-based intermediaries, with the goal of facilitating communication between various levels, but not directly aligned with any of them. As such organisations project the illusion of inter-level engagement and a clarity of attributes desirable to donors, they appeal to international governments and media. This can result in large amounts of power but, potentially, little or no legitimacy. While often seen as redundant and innocuous at the immediate country level, they can prove dangerous by potentially favouring and conveying national and local discourses of limited credibility, giving them disproportionate attention on the international stage. Similarly, there has been an increasing trend towards the formation of meta-NGOs, whose *'primary*

purpose is to provide information and assistance to other NGOs' (Bach and Stark, 2001: 15), but with the acknowledged risk that they may just end up derailing international funding, imposing hierarchical power, and essentially acting as governing bodies for both NGOs and local initiatives.

The culture of NGO engagement can subsequently be broadly divided into large, successful, bureaucratic but often largely disengaged and/or rhetorical INGOs, meta-NGOs and intermediaries, alongside the localised, under-funded community initiatives that are less publicised but can (arguably) be more genuine sources of social energy (Hirschman, 1984). Stubbs' research in Croatia illustrated this division, as well as that, although there were distinct overlaps of stated priorities and areas of engagement, there was little connection between any of the actors (Stubbs, 2006). His recommendation was that international NGOs and state agencies should stop being allowed to put their own survival, and the agendas of their donors, ahead of the wider causes; instead, they should put more effort into creating spaces for mutual learning and identifying/supporting areas of community engagement (Stubbs, 2006).

Summarizing the Context, Considering the Research Implications

Issues surrounding international perspectives and involvement on the Thai-Burma border had, at least partially, been identified in the current academic literature in relation to the refugee camps. However, existing analysis offered little to no information about how such views had impacted on the operations, activities, perspectives and priorities of the grassroots rights-based groups, the lines along

which they divided, and the environment in which they subsequently functioned. As this chapter has revealed, while the emergence of a Thai-based *'Burma Movement'* was logical and necessary for the active pursuit of democracy, assessing the historical and political context exposed deeply-rooted divisions within the country; not just between the junta and the people, but the perceived oppression, underrepresentation and marginalisation of the ethnic-minority nationalities by the Burman majority. Such engrained concerns, and the lack of trust cultivated and perpetuated by them, also then became significant factors in border-based operations and the potential for successful collaborations. There were also evident issues around the range of opinions voiced on how the post-election country could develop, with contradictory recommendations relating to macroeconomic stability, government policy, trade agreements and the role/responsibility of the international community in pursuing justice for victims of human rights violations. By investigating the results of development policies and INGOs having misconstrued transitional situations in other countries, and the negative implications of mismatched implementation styles and priorities, parallel concerns were identified as potential contributory factors within border-based operations. If Burma followed suit, then instead of merely representing problems of temporary significance, international impacts on the behaviours and values of those on the border could prove to be sustained sources of serious conflict, causing significant distancing and disconnection if/when those involved returned to their home communities. To be able to contextualize such concerns analytically, the next challenge was identifying, and justifying, potential theoretical positions and practical approaches that could be directly utilised by interacting with those actively involved.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, REFLEXIVITY, BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE, AND A THEORY OF FIELDS

Introduction to the Theoretical Position(s)

Having already explored the background and output of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*', in this chapter we investigate how it could be analysed to offer additional insight into underlying issues, especially in relation to why it may not always have managed to conform to the expectations and presumptions of various stakeholders. Firstly, could the border-based '*Burma Movement*' correctly be defined as a 'social movement'; if so, whether classical, structural, social-constructivist or New Social Movement (NSM) theories could best be applied to uncover hidden layers of organisational/cultural meaning, and the personal motivations/emotional connections, of those involved. This then raises questions related to the allocation of resources and the prospects of leaders and participants, both those within the groups themselves and the expectations of, and related power held by, external donors, governments, media networks and INGOs.

When examples from Africa and the Middle East query the effectiveness of the application of NSM theories beyond Western contexts, this leads into the potential for utilising the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, including the foundations and scope for application of his key tools of field, capital and habitus, and their associated *Theory of Practice*. This framework offers the potential to unify and analyse distinct social phenomena, providing insight beyond the sum of the parts. Another useful concept also emerges from Bourdieu's work, reflexive sociology, and how it can be applied by transcending the perspective of the interviewer and intertwining theory and data. A further approach is presented through Fligstein and McAdam's *A Theory of Fields* (2012). This integrated theory builds on many of Bourdieu's ideas, allowing for the combination of fields of strategic action, their destabilisation through processes of change, and the importance of resources and social skills, to explain change and stability within social arenas.

A provisional hypothesis is thus developed that, while the '*Burma Movement*' did consist of a single field in a very general sense, in practice it contained multiple differing fields of strategic action which were working towards conflicting final outcomes. Tensions could thus have arisen not primarily because of gender, ethnicity or leadership issues, but due to the fragmented understanding and expectations resulting from internal and external parties holding different assumptions in relation to motivation, intention, and social interaction.

Social Movement Theories and Approaches

Although an overview has already been given about what types of activities and issues the Thai-based grassroots Burma organisations were involved in, to be able to develop a deeper understanding a more specific analytical lens was required. As the informal term was the *'Burma Movement'*, a logical first step was establishing whether the organisations could, arguably, have been categorised as participating in, or representing, one or more social movement(s). It was not, however, immediately apparent whether the term could be meaningfully applied.

As social movement theories gradually emerged and developed, three perspectives (collective behaviour, mass society and relative deprivation) could loosely be grouped together as the 'classical approaches'. Although these three theories were dissimilar, there was overlap in their general consensus that structural tension would lead to subjective tension, resulting in extreme reaction. Protests were typically helmed by those who felt marginalised, alienated and manipulated by class conflict, social discontent and/or other grievances, with protests manifesting in ways that could be irrational, spontaneous and potentially violent. While more rapidly-emerging movements inside Burma (such as the 1988 student protests or the 2007 Saffron Revolution) could certainly be classified in such terms, due to their relative stability and longevity the majority of Thai-Burma border organisations could not.

In later literature there was more fragmentation, although two broadly divergent streams emerged; the US-led structural and the European-influenced social-constructivist. In a very general sense, the structural approaches particularly focused

on how collective action occurs, while the social-constructivist theories were more concerned with why (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009). The three main categories collectively described as structural are rational action, resource mobilization and political process. Although divergent in their particular explanations and emphasis, they can be grouped as they all, to an extent, agree that mobilization arises from a power base and pursues rational interests; the behaviours of institutions and movements are not fundamentally different; outcomes are central and the result of participants' strategic choices; and elite groups can affect results by virtue of their repression or support (Morris and Herring, 1984). Each is also more concerned with determining how aggrieved individuals choose to participate in protests, rather than determining the initial cause(s) of their aggravation.

Rational action theorists do not consider social movements as primarily resulting from injustices, deprivation or systemic breakdowns, but more as reflections of the realisation of vested interests. In general terms, the resource mobilization perspective moved grievances away from being the central instigators of social movements. Instead, the key concerns are the tangible (money, number of participants, access to services, positions of influence) and intangible (skills, respect, legitimacy, trust, commitment etc.) resources that the collective group can expect to mobilize in the pursuit, or prevention, of change to the currently accepted structures of society and reward (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009). Like rational action approaches, the involved concepts relate more to the vocabulary of economics than psychology or politics. The more specific organisational-entrepreneurial perspective (formulated by McCarthy and Zald, 1977), theorized that

social movements would need to operate in professional and formalised ways, in part to address the free rider issue. Subsequently, they would have to exhibit business sense and entrepreneurship, work (supposedly) on behalf of an oppressed group but with small immediate memberships, and be largely reliant on funding from externally affluent, but socially conscious, supporters distinct from the beneficiaries. McCarthy and Zald excluded conflict and activities from this definition of 'professional social movements', instead viewing particular leaders and organisations (who would need to apply their particular skills to achieve results) as separate dynamics from the issues. Leaders' strategies could therefore be seen as underpinned by rational action, as their own position in that particular social movement would be determined by the relative benefits of advancement, incentives, and development opportunities that it provides. Similarly, selectively chosen workers, often volunteers, could then conduct much of the actual work while also feeling that they were receiving selective benefits by virtue of enhancing their experience, prestige etc. (Oberschall, 1973). Through the assumption that resources are central to success, such approaches could risk oppressed group(s) becoming largely reliant upon the activities of these small organisations and external donors to enact change on their behalf (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). While resource mobilization largely seeks to explain the ebbs and flows of social movements through their own internal systems and access to assets, the political process model takes a more external stance. Rather than viewing a 'social movement' as a particular group reacting to a current issue, it instead sees the entailed central process(es) as the sustained collective interactions with, and generated by, the structures of nationalised politics. Subsequently, those challenging the political

status quo must be internally organised, with infrastructure, resources, cultural awareness, and formal and/or informal networks (which may or may not predate the current movement), all of which must be capable of being mobilized into collective action (Morris, 1981). Political parties and social movements are therefore effectively two halves of the same coin, with all actors pursuing power in relation to the same political process, albeit one from the national structure down and the other from the participants up (Tilly, 1979). However, by attempting to explain the movements by their collective positions, consideration of the behaviours and emotions of the involved individuals is lost.

Unlike the structural approaches, social-constructivist perspectives focus on the perceptions, motivations and interpretations by groups and individuals of the particular causes and implications of their contention. While classical approaches also acknowledged the significance of emotional engagement, the social-constructivist theorists considered such responses and behaviours as normal and inevitable, rather than pathological and hindering (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009). Again, there are three central concepts that can be broadly grouped under this heading; social identity, emotional connection and framing.

The social identity perspective relates to the significance and value that an individual attributes to being a part of a particular group, which then influences the thoughts and actions of all those who feel included within it. The intended goals of the group can therefore be less important to the members than their feelings of affinity, and therefore solidarity, with others who also believe they belong (Tajfel and Turner,

1979). Similarly, appreciating the emotional connection of those involved, and especially how it has been socially constructed, can help to explain affinity to, and mobilization of, particular groups in response to specific causes. Historical and cultural factors can influence attitudes towards, and the perception of, particular events and political processes. The related emotions may then be manipulated to invoke anger, indignation and/or moral outrage towards particular occurrences or targets that can be made to appear inconsistent with accepted norms (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2001), resulting in fast and impassioned protest. Contrary to the classical approaches, these need not necessarily be irrational or violent (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009). Framing, or collective action frames, are compilations of action-oriented tools and perspectives which can be applied to help diagnose particular conditions, make sense of particular events/experiences, offer discussions and solutions, and both support and motivate collective action (Benford and Snow, 2000). The aim is for the frame to achieve resonance by not only being sufficiently flexible to adapt to different circumstances (socioeconomic, political etc.), but inspiring the potential for mobilization to become transformed into reality (Meijer, 2005). This balance is realised as much by responding to political and cultural cues, as to the appearance of legitimacy and authority of the groups and individuals involved. Framing thus includes cognitive concerns, but bridges theoretical gaps by also acknowledging the importance of emotional resonance (Benford and Snow, 2000). However, stakeholders from alternative perspectives could seemingly also, simultaneously, attempt to create their own frames around what they perceived the key issues and courses of action to be, with no guarantee that the definitions would necessarily align.

While various attempts were made to synthesize the structural and social-constructivist perspectives (e.g. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996; Klandermans, Kriesi and Tarrow, 1988; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001), no ultimately successful paradigm ever emerged, resulting in an increasingly diverse, and largely specific case study-based, field of research. The theoretical fragmentation continued, being increasingly and rapidly influenced by processes such as economic and political globalization, network diversification, and the virtualization brought by the growth of information and communication technologies (van Stekelenburg and Roggeband, 2013).

An alternative perspective is the more recently developed New Social Movement (NSM) theory (or, perhaps more correctly, theories), loosely referring to a varied selection of collective actions, addressing a range of concepts (culture, politics, gender, identity, ethnicity etc.) as critical reactions to, updates of, or attempts to transcend and/or replace classical Marxism (Buechler, 1995). Core ideas include the importance of postmaterialist values, construction of collective identities and grievances, self-determination, symbolic action and temporal networks, although the extent to which any of these can meaningfully be labelled as 'new' is questionable (Melucci, 1989; Klandermans, 1992). Buechler (1995) attempted a typological distinction between the key (predominantly European) theorists and debates to determine coherent central themes, ultimately proposing two theoretical positions; political and cultural. Distinctions were not always consistent, with theorists potentially adhering to both versions at different times, with others defying classification. The boundaries and usefulness of the generalised NSM paradigm are

therefore somewhat unclear, with criticism even extending to claiming that the *'inability to argue convincingly for a typology of contemporary movements or a link to changes in socioeconomic structures leaves the NSM thesis untenable as theory'* (Pichardo, 1997: 426).

So while the various social movement theories provided a range of potential options, more analysis of their relevance was required if one or more was going to be effectively applied to the Thai-Burma border.

Choosing a Path and Recognising Alternative Contexts

Social movement theories of resource mobilization and organisational-entrepreneurial situations appeared to explain many of the international/grassroots interactions and collaborations in the Thai border context, particularly in relation to the donor expectations of policy, leadership and supposed best practice. This could then make the provision of resources dependent on their complying with internationally-determined stipulations and approaches, instead of anything inspired organically. While many internal Burma organisations (especially those led by Burmans) appeared to conform to the political process approach definition, it was less appropriate to the particular grassroots groups (youth, women, environmentalism etc., as opposed to political parties or ethnic-minority councils) that were to be the focus of the field research. This distinction was not, however, necessarily recognised by external donors or international stakeholders; the implications then potentially contributing to miscommunication, the setting of inappropriate grant stipulations, and enforced (but inappropriate) collaborations. As

numerous Thai-Burma organisations were centred around various forms of identity (ethnicity, gender, age etc.), there was certainly evidence that, consistent with social identity perspectives, a sense of belonging and community may have been being prioritised above the addressing of the issues. As will be further explored in later chapters, the language and subjectivity used within some of the self-produced '*Burma Movement*' reports was evidently designed to evoke resonance consistent with emotional connection perspectives. While the acknowledgment of factors evident within the grassroots groups (such as self-determination, collective identity and symbolic action) seemed to suggest that NSM theories may be viable options, it has also been stated that new social movement theories are only '*a powerful tool for understanding the macrolevel social structures that shape contemporary activism*' (Buechler, 1995: 460), and that they '*can only claim to explain left-wing movements of the modern age*' (Pichardo, 1997: 413). Such criticisms thus challenge their relevance to the exploration of the personal perspectives and organisational values of grassroots organisations formed by those from subsistence-level rural economies from Burma's ethnic-minority states. However, if the analytical potential only extends to '*a limited number of movements in Western societies with mobilization biases toward white, middle-class participants pursuing politically or culturally progressive agendas*' (Buecher, 1995: 460), some aspects could still be valid if the aim was to better understand the external actors who also held power over (as to opposed to within) the context. This could include external parties such as governments, international press and NGOs with Burma-related interests.

An alternative way to attempt to determine the best analytical approach was by investigating how effective various theories had proved to be (either singularly or in various combinations) when applied in previous studies. Significantly, researchers investigating other countries had noted the shortcomings of Western-led approaches to their contexts, resulting in the need to unite and adapt the existing social movement theories to formulate something more relevant. For example, the anthology *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Wiktorowicz, 2004), acknowledged the differences in leadership and culture that movements in the Middle East could face, compared to those in North America and Europe. Interestingly, the assessment Wiktorowicz made of the general situation for many Middle Eastern countries closely matched the circumstances facing those within the Burma context -

Islamist movements are not only confronted by repressive authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states, they are usually also opposed by a unified and closed elite that does not allow movements to organize themselves as political parties or be overtly active in civil society. For this reason, Islamist movements in general mostly operate on the periphery and semi-periphery of society, finding first of all refuge in the informal sector, to a lesser extent in civil society, and rarely in the "centre" – parliamentary politics. (Meijer, 2005: 282)

In order to enable more flexible and inclusive analysis than previously achieved through the application of civil society theories, Wiktorowicz *et al* subsequently presented a new collaborative social movement manifesto which addressed the particular circumstances of the Middle East context by combining aspects of framing, resource mobilization and rational choice.

Similarly, *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa* (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009) gathered eight empirical social movement case studies, covering different countries and issues across the continent. The volume introduced the collection as having deliberately avoided the definitions of social movement as outlined in the existing American and European literature, instead deciding to acknowledge -

...some of the provisional conclusions drawn from the literature on social movements make use of the instruments of social movement theory, while remaining open to the possibility that not all aspects of the relevant African phenomena would necessarily fit into these theories (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009: 11)

However, alongside the exploration of democratic movements in Malawi and women peace-builders in Liberia, the editors also stated that they realised that external parties could and did exert influence, as *'some social movements in Africa might be largely driven by outside stimuli in the form of inducements from aid donors'* (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009: 9).

So while other non-Western countries had been acknowledged as not wholly conforming to existing academic models, with aspects of classical, social-constructivist and new social movement theories all being adapted and applied to these various movements instead, a clear way of combining the most relevant theories to provide a framework and methodology was not yet apparent. While several aspects of social movement theories were acknowledged as relevant, an approach was needed that could be adapted and applied to embrace a multi-faceted, complex and nuanced situation. One particular theorist subsequently

emerged as offering a set of tools that had the potential to be meaningfully applied when researching the Thai-Burma context.

The Theories of Pierre Bourdieu

The decision to incorporate the work of Pierre Bourdieu, in preference to a multitude of other potential perspectives, was largely inspired by his practical and theoretical diversity. Although Bourdieu's work made significant contributions to areas as varied as art, religion, education, psychoanalysis, politics and housing policy (Webb *et al*, 2002), arguably his greatest impact came from the interplay of the central tools of field, habitus, capital and their connected *Theory of Practice*. Rather than conforming to one particular theoretical school or mode of knowledge, throughout his work Bourdieu attempted to transcend existing divisions by unifying the objectivism/subjectivism antimony; overcoming their dualism was identified by Bourdieu as *'the most steadfast (and, in my eyes, the most important) intention guiding my work'* (Bourdieu, 1989: 15). Eventually, Bourdieu considered that these two approaches were only divided artificially, as they actually *'stand in dialectical relationship'* (Bourdieu, 1994: 125), and subsequently moved towards a synthesis where the social structures of objectivism and mental structures of subjectivism could instead be seen to be interlinked by a mutual relationship of correspondence and constitution (Wacquant, 2008). This would not only go on to inform his class-symbolization model (Swartz, 1997), but was subsequently developed into a rich theoretical framework, comprised of the interlocking notions of habitus, field and capital.

A key concept for Bourdieu is 'field', meant not in the traditional sense of 'sphere of life', but more as a metaphor. Fields are, essentially, *'a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitutes an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities'* (Webb *et al*, 2002: xi). For Bourdieu, 'field' is an open concept, a way of conceptualising the relationships between cultural and social practices and structures, distinct from subjectivism and objectivism, and a corrective against positivism (Swartz, 1997). Fields are not only structured spaces, but a structured distribution of some form of capital (Swartz, 1997). The concept of field is then, in turn, defined by its internal hierarchy, which is itself the product of a particular combination of capitals (Guzzini, 2006: 7). Moreover, *'a field is also constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field and how that capital is to be distributed'* (Webb *et al*, 2002: xi). Used in a broad and even ambiguous sense, 'capital' simply refers to the necessary resources (and potential mobilization thereof) required to accomplish desired ends. Bourdieu distances himself from Marxism by extending capital beyond labour theory to include power in all forms (Swartz, 1997), identifying three primary categories (Bourdieu, 1986: 241-258).

Economic – Financial and materials assets, transferable between generations. Readily convertible into other forms of capital and, to a lesser extent, vice versa.

Social – Resources obtained through the connections and mutual relationships involved in group and/or class association/membership, acceptance, recognition, belonging.

Cultural – Three different forms, i) *institutionalized*, including honours, such as academic degrees, credentials and titles, ii) *embodied*, such as acquired skills, manners, appreciations, experience and insights, iii) *objectified*, involving culturally significant products; literary, artistic, musical, mechanical etc.

There is also a fourth subsidiary category, *Symbolic*, which '*designates the effects of any form of capital when people do not perceive them as such*' (Wacquant, 2008: 268), although the others would generally be ascribed higher value, dependent on the degree of non-tangible recognition and legitimization afforded by the rules and particulars of the field. Taking this a step further is the concept of symbolic violence, referring to the legitimization of social structures of inequality (Wacquant, 2008). Those who do not possess the capital to conform to agreed conventions (either deliberately or unknowingly) are then treated unfairly by others (subconsciously or intentionally), but they, to varying degrees, accept the discrimination (be it based on class, gender, career, religion etc.) as part of the natural order (Webb *et al*, 2002). However, capital is not a stand-alone idea, as it is irrevocably intertwined with, and interdependent on, fields. Field boundaries, the potential for change, and degree of autonomy, are then all set in relation to the associated combinations and volume of capital available (Oakes *et al*, 1998). Depending on the particular focus of the field, any of the culture categories can prove to be dominant, with the strategic rules of

the game enabling the individual use of capital to gain power and, in turn, reproduce the field (Mayrhofer *et al*, 2007).

Bourdieu's description of 'habitus' evolves and expands throughout his work, from a '*set of basic, deeply interiorized master-patterns*' (Bourdieu, 1971: 192) primarily related to how social order becomes internalized within the human body (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001), to the more elaborate -

...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 53)

Therefore, habitus is structured by personal circumstances and conditions of existence, being both perpetually rooted in the past but adapted by/to the present. It provides a structure that is systematic regarding appreciations and practices, ordered by its system of dispositions, based on the central components of structure and propensity (Swartz, 1997). It then, in turn, perpetuates structuring by influencing both the current and future perceptions, and actions, of individuals, groups or institutions. However, rather than enforcing rigidity and conformity, habitus is '*intended to transcend a series of deep-seated dichotomies structuring ways of thinking about the social world*' (Maton, 2008: 49). Essentially, habitus can be seen as a matrix of behavioural dispositions, absorbed from the social structures of values, beliefs, attributes and attitudes, which then form a particular construction

(akin to personality) that informs not only thoughts and feelings, but beliefs and behaviours in relation to the social reality (Fries, 2009). The concept of habitus is intertwined with both field and capital; habitus informs practices from *within*, as opposed to fields which structure from *without* (Wacquant, 2008). Their relationship is interlinked, as fields mould/produce the habitus, which then, in turn, influence the actions that then construct/restructure fields (Crossley, 2001). While capital can be divided into different types, habitus can be perceived as that capital then being incorporated (Mayrhofer *et al*, 2007). Habitus can therefore be affected by field, as well as through the fluctuating notions of which form of capital is currently the most important. Fields therefore function according to their own mix of associated capital, which are themselves socially conditioned by, and embodied within, the behaviours and perceptions of groups and individuals within that particular habitus (Fries, 2009).

Although interrelated, none of the components are individually sufficient to explain action. Bourdieu subsequently combined his concepts in *Distinction* (1984) with the seemingly deterministic formula $[(\textit{habitus})(\textit{capital})] + \textit{field} = \textit{practice}$ (Bourdieu, 1984: 101). Bourdieu was not unique amongst his contemporary social and cultural theorists in developing a theory of practice, as habitus is closely related to Foucault's (1979) concept of discipline, but with less emphasis on violence (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001). There are also similarities with Giddens' (1984) *Constitution of Society*, although his route followed theories on the duality of structure rather than empirical research. While each has their own particular sources and objectives, they all approach the social realm through the same nexus; incorporating not only the

actions of the individual, but the physical movements of their bodies (Schatzki, 2001). But what set Bourdieu apart, and potentially offered utility for the Thai-Burma context, was his insistence that his theories should be applied reflexively.

Reflexivity is not a unique concept, but it can be particularly associated with Bourdieu due to his constant dedication; *'If there is a single feature that makes Bourdieu stand out in the landscape of contemporary social theory, it is his signature obsession with reflexivity'* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 36). Distinct from Weber's notion of native/ethnographer being separated by webs of significance (Bourdieu, 1990), *'it is not the individual unconscious of the researcher but the epistemological unconscious of his discipline which must be unearthed'* (Wacquant, 1992: 41). The methodological realism of Bourdieu's interpretation of reflexive sociology leads to the rejection of a dualist individual/society vision, instead favouring structures (cognitive, corporeal and cognitive) that acknowledge individual/society interactions as ongoing communications rather than confrontations (Fries, 2009). Bourdieu asserts that the intellectual perspective is the sum of both the individual's view and the collective unconscious of the academic field, which is constructed of its own conventions composed of the thoughts and practices of its members. By his reasoning, this cannot be reduced to/by individuals (Kenway and McLeod, 2004) and attempting to do so produces a scholastic fallacy, which he rejects. However, when pursued, this habit of scholastic thinking can itself be classified as reflexive, becoming *'simultaneously, both a potential impediment to, and a condition (almost necessary) of the production of reflexive knowledge'* (Schirato and Webb, 2003: 551). Bourdieu developed a two-step process for disengaging from both the subjects'

experiences and the researcher's presuppositions, called the '*epistemological break*' (Nord, 2005: 859). This entails being able to detach from the accepted perspectives of the world, appreciate alternative viewpoints, and '*break the relationships that are the most apparent and most familiar, in order to bring out the new system of relations among the elements*' (Bourdieu *et al*, 1991: 14). Epistemic reflexivity therefore aims to enable the researcher to transcend their own position, by creating co-dependent social, objectifying and epistemic relationships. There is a co-dependency rather than conflict; theories are developed from empirical data, which then are applied to gather additional information, which in turn generate theoretical hypotheses (Horvat, 2003). Reflexivity is subsequently compatible with Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field and, within the field, position and disposition; these are what form the basis for academic exploration, not the individual perspectives and opinions of the researcher (Kenway and McLeod, 2004).

While Bourdieu's conceptual tools emerged as useful for researching the previously identified divisions in, and framings applied to, the Thai-Burma context, his theories are not without their detractors. While his theory of practice has the potential to analyse and unify distinct social phenomena into a common framework that offers insight beyond the sum of its parts, the desire to combine approaches does not necessarily make them compatible. The formula for practice is puzzling, as aside from expressing a literary flourish that combines four of his key concepts, the actual relationships and procedures for application are somewhat unclear; the end result has been described as a largely impenetrable theoretical suggestion that lacks credible development (Warde, 2004). To achieve practical utility, careful translation

and refinement are required to achieve a balance that is not inaccurate, overreaching or irrelevant to both academics and practitioners (Gunter, 2002).

The concept of field has been accused of being overstretched, as it cannot fully appreciate action that is non-strategic, acknowledge internal goods produced through practice (self-esteem, satisfaction, social benefit), or accept discrepancies between social position and actual competence (Warde, 2004). While Bourdieu indicated that *'the chief merit of the notion of field... is that it allows us to transcend a whole series of methodological and theoretical antinomies'* (Wacquant, 1989: 41) the assertion that there are *'as many fields of preference as there are fields of stylistic possibilities'* (Bourdieu, 1984: 226) leads to broad definitions and a lack of boundaries. By refusing to limit the scope, Bourdieu has been accused of presenting a concept with *'excessively generous application'* (Swartz, 1997: 121) with limited opportunity for objective insight (although his call for reflexive practice does, to an extent, address this). The notion of capital, particularly cultural forms, has also been criticised as restrictive and incomplete. For example, Lamont (1992) alleges that the conceptualisation removes the opportunity for the recognition of the individual's evaluation of the moral concerns of their own and others' actions. Also, Giroux (1983) alleges it removes the acknowledgement of the role of culture in empowering subordinates to overcome domination. While the field-oriented emphasis is embraced by such commentators as Robbins, Swartz and Barnard as exemplifying epistemic reflexivity, Maton (2003) suggests that the end result is less an epistemic, than objectifying, reflexivity. The acknowledgement of the relationship between researcher and subject should, following reflexive logic, then itself become a

component from which new relationships (and opportunities for analysis) are formed, both separate from, and in relation to, themselves and to the knowledge (Maton, 2003).

So while Bourdieu crafted a set of tools that provisionally offered considerable relevance for identifying involved considerations within the Thai-Burma context, there were certain limitations to their practical utility; particularly, in relation to field boundaries and the field-specific stipulations entwined within his description of capital. As the intention was to investigate the underlying divisions of the border-based *'Burma Movement'*, there were not obvious lines along which specific fields (and related capital) could be definitively delineated according to Bourdieu's definitions; the apparent lack of clarity, consistency and contradiction of various aims, values and future intentions being central to the focus of the research question. However, during analysis, a new perspective was discovered that proposed a conceptual progression and analytical flexibility that could be applied to acknowledge, then address, many of these concerns.

Strategic Action Fields and Social Skills

One recent work that attempts to synthesise many of the above theories is *A Theory of Fields* (2012), in which Fligstein and McAdam formulate a new encompassing framework of strategic action and social organisation derived from political, economic, organisational and social movement theories. Fligstein and McAdam's definition of a field relates to *'a set of positions in a field of power relations (similar to the view of Bourdieu). We conceive of it this way since we believe that in every field,*

something is always at stake' (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 217). They assert that, since the 1960s, scholars from different disciplines have approached a range of phenomena that they have refrained from discussing together due to differing empirical interests, thus resisting the possibility that they may have *'unwittingly discovered something fundamental about how social reality works'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 210). By suggesting that *'the discovery of fields is in fact a cross-disciplinary phenomena'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 200), they claim a degree of unacknowledged overlap between the academic fields of political sociology, social movement theory, organisational theory, and the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. Subsequently, they propose the chance for a general, integrated, collaborative theory of fields, *'a set of theoretical concepts that transcend subfield divisions'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 221). Their ultimate intention is to convince those from a range of disciplines that –

...society is the underlying structure that explains the contours of social life and ultimately shapes their life chances. Moreover, their actions always occur in social contexts and therefore are determined by the opportunities and constraints that are presented to them as well as the social influence of others. (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 192)

The central concept they subsequently propose is the theory of strategic action fields (SAFs). A SAF is defined as *'a flexible set of concepts and relationships that apply across a large number of settings... amenable to use by scholars with radically different philosophies of science'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 184), the purpose in application being a *'way in which to make sense of mesolevel social order in a wide variety of social, economic, and political situations'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:

220-221). For a SAF to emerge, a consensus must be reached on four issues (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 88-89). Namely, a shared understanding of what is at stake; a comparatively consensual agreement that certain actors hold legitimate power/status; the general format of particular governing 'rules' within the field context is collectively and culturally understood as meaningful and legitimate; that both collective and individual actors make sense of others through a shared, if broad, interpretive frame. Field formation thus entails two or more groups interacting to organise a social space, with a stable settlement dependent on (at least) four factors –

(1) the resource (or other power) disparity between the parties (which conditions the likelihood that a settlement will be imposed on the field); (2) the social skill of the actors involved (which conditions the likelihood that a settlement will be reached through negotiation and consensus); (3) the extent to which state actors intervene to help effect or impede a settlement; and (4) the creation of internal governance units to help routinize and implement the terms of the settlement (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 96)

While the settlement of a field has been hypothesised as relating to either majority consensus and collaboration, or, as argued by Bourdieu, more to power, conflict and self-interest on the part of the dominant actors (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), Fligstein and McAdam argue that –

...cooperation and hierarchy are both present in the organization of fields. We view fields as a continuum with those exhibiting high levels of consensus, coalition, and cooperation at one end and those based on stark hierarchy and stark differences in power at the other. (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 90)

To make sense of what others within the field are doing, Fligstein and McAdam expect actors to embrace different frames of interpretation to reflect the relative positions and perspectives of those involved. Typically, they suggest that those dominant and/or incumbent within a field will adopt a frame of reference that encapsulates and perpetuates their own self-serving view, while the dominated and/or actors challenging the current status quo will adopt an oppositional stance. However, this can only represent general trends, as actors remain individuals beyond their groups; *'different actors in different positions in the strategic action field will vary in their interpretation of events and respond to them from their own point of view'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 11). In addition to incumbents/challengers, those in dominant positions will also create *internal governance units* (IGUs), additional subfields of power and influence that serve to legitimize, safeguard and perpetuate their interests (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 205).

Once a SAF has emerged, Fligstein and McAdam's analysis pays particular attention to not only internal and incumbent/challenger dynamics, but to *'events in a host of "external" strategic action fields with which the field in question has very close and sometimes dependent ties'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 57-58). Subsequently, as fields do not operate in vacuums, effective analysis must also involve a significant understanding of *'the extent to which these dynamics are inextricably linked to events elsewhere in the dense latticework or system of interdependent fields that comprise modern society'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 58) and *'the relationship between single strategic action fields and the set of proximate state and nonstate fields on which they routinely depend'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 203). Fields can

therefore be understood in terms of three types of relationships, *'unconnected, hierarchical or dependent, and reciprocal or interdependent'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 59), with links being shaped by factors including *'resource dependence, mutual beneficial interactions, sharing of power, information flows, and legitimacy'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 59). As virtually *'all fields are embedded in a dense network of other fields, some of which they are uniquely dependent on'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 203), SAFs can typically be deconstructed into their units and identified as embedded within larger fields. The relationship can be hierarchical or cooperative, arranged in either what they term a *'Russian doll'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 59) vertical formation, or *'the more common horizontal latticework structure'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 204).

As an expansion of, rather than opposition to, existing field theory approaches that seek to isolate a particular field, define proximate field relationships, and explore its formation and/or transformation (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 220), Fligstein and McAdam are additionally interested in the overlooked study of the processes involved within inter-field linkages. Their solution to the issue of establishing who belongs within a field does not entail only focusing on those interested in one particular outcome, but instead suggests that SAFs are *'linked arenas whereby actors might be playing in multiple arenas simultaneously'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 216). In particular, rather than assuming that 'the state' can be considered to be a single entity, they conceive of states *'as complex systems of interdependent fields in their own right'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 206) typically conforming to their Russian doll model of hierarchical bureaucracy. They consider the role of the state as

critical, asserting that failing to acknowledge its importance is *'one of the fundamental mistakes of organizational theory and sometimes social movement theory; that is, they use the state in an ad hoc fashion and invoke it either as the enemy or as an actor that might occasionally muck things up'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 174).

While internal processes are ongoing sources of tension and conflict, Fligstein and McAdam contend that field destabilization and rupture normally (though not exclusively) occurs not through gradual shifts, but significant acts of crisis. Specifically, their definition of crisis refers to *'a situation in which the legitimacy of the principles of the field is being threatened such that they no longer are able to deliver valued ends'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 176). These crises then typically occur in external fields with repercussions felt rapidly, as what they term *'exogenous shocks'*.

We see three principal external sources of field destabilization: (1) invasion by outside groups, (2) changes in fields upon which the strategic action field in question is dependent, and (3) those rare macroevents (e.g., war, depression) that serve to destabilize the broader social/political context in which the field is embedded. (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 99)

Such occurrences then shatter the status quo, leaving fields open to transformation, resettlement, alternative alliances and the potential emergence of alternative arenas. When a field becomes destabilized, it is expected that incumbents will respond conservatively, refuting alternative perspectives and attempting to maintain their position of privilege by *'fighting tenaciously to preserve the settlement that is the*

political and cultural source of their advantage... even when it is apparent to most observers that the system is doomed' (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 105). Ultimately, the SAF approach claims analytical usefulness as it –

...pushes analysts to define the purpose of the field; the key field actors (e.g., incumbents and challengers); the rules that structure relations and action in the strategic action field; the external fields—state and nonstate—that are most important to the reproduction of the strategic action field; and the IGUs that are in place and how they function to stabilize and sustain the field. (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 162)

While the SAF approach builds upon existing theories concerning fields (notably those of Bourdieu), it diverges through the inclusion of associated concepts; not habitus and capital, but rules, social skills and resources.

Fligstein and McAdam suggest that the creation and sustainability of fields is partially dependent on the social skills of those involved, with the functionality of fields reliant upon groups and individuals actively participating. They define social skill as *'the ability to induce cooperation by appealing to and helping to create shared meanings and collective identities'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 46). The social skill concept assists with three central problems related to field theory; 1) a collaborative need to develop meaning is essential to human sociability; 2) the identity and meaning that can be conferred by collective affinity is both a desirable outcome of, and central force behind, individual action; 3) shifting the emphasis of social order emergence/maintenance/transference to the action and contributions of actors, rather than their motives and reactions to their positions. Essentially, the

notion of social skill is proposed as a microtheory to aid understanding of what actors do within and between fields, encapsulating *'the blend of pre-existing rules, resources, and the social skills of actors that combine to produce fields in the first place, make them stable on a period to period basis, and produce transformation'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 109). A distinction is drawn from Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where *'individuals' reaction to a particular situation depends upon their position in a particular field, the resources available to them, and their perception of strategic options based on socialization and lived experience'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 50), by instead stating that *'in our theory, however, actors are never simply self-interested'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 50). Ultimately, social skill *'is what bridges the gap between what individuals are doing and the structures and logics that result from their efforts'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 54). However, social skills are not the only contributing factor, as the outcome of field-related conflicts will *'depend not just on the distribution of social skill across groups but also on resource endowments, political allies, and events in other proximate fields'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 55).

The effective application of social skills thus relates to actors developing a level of understanding and empathy about their context and circumstances that allows them to not only identify the wants and needs of others, but utilise this information. This can either be towards the achievement of their own particular goals, or the cooperation/competition with those of similar aspirations. Social skills thus become *'...the lubricant that makes social life work. Rules and resources exist and are building blocks. But without the social skill of people who interpret these rules and mobilize*

these resources, the rules and resources do not matter all that much' (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 178).

This perspective aligns, to an extent, with Bourdieu's *'tacit view that to understand what actors are doing, we need to know the field, the habitus of individuals, and their forms of capital (resources)'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 218). Fligstein and McAdam's definitions of resource advantages include *'material, existential/symbolic, and political'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 85) and *'ideological'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 165), thus making their use of the term 'resources' similar to Bourdieu's use of 'capital'. However, their position differs from Bourdieu due to their stress on the existential importance of social function, which they find *'difficult to reconcile with what we see as Bourdieu's more starkly materialist view'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 218). While they also stress the importance of cultural, human and social resources (capital) for being able to successfully compete within a field, due to the nature of SAFs often adopting either horizontally or vertically interlinked relationships, and actors playing in multiple arenas simultaneously, resources are then available across SAFs as opposed to field-specific. As the value of resources in an emerging field *'may not be apparent and the actual resource dependencies may not be clear'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 181), the recognition of a resource (and the possession of sufficient awareness of the wider context to be able to utilize and maximize resources, subsequently aiding the accomplishment of their goals and securing/advancing their position within the emerging structure) becomes a component of social skill. Acknowledging this additional factor, and the opportunity to widen some of Bourdieu's theories in more flexible directions, subsequently

greatly helped when attempting to understand the actions, motivations and intentions of those involved in the Thai-based *'Burma Movement'*.

Connecting the Theory to the Context

When first considering how to engage in academic analysis, the grassroots Thai-Burma border context provided a range of challenges. Using Bourdieu's tools, one potential path would be to define the *'Burma Movement'* as one field containing numerous subfields, and then attempt to ignore or consolidate the divergent goals and motivations of the multitude of people and groups encapsulated within it. However, the sheer number of nuanced perspectives, and the stipulation that capital must be field specific, would quickly lead to an unwieldy construction of increasingly narrow subfields-within-subfields, which would largely be analytically unworkable. Subsequently, the thought arose as to whether it could perhaps instead be more usefully (and accurately) conceptualised as two or more co-existing fields, or if an alternative theoretical approach would be more apt. While Bourdieu talked extensively of field formation and internal dynamics, he gave comparatively little consideration to how concurrent fields could coexist and interact, their collective dynamics, or how they might transform. As summarized by Fligstein and McAdam, *'while Bourdieu was very aware of the fact that fields were connected to one another, he rarely theorized the linkages between fields and the dynamics that could result from the interactions between fields'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 26). While Bourdieu highlighted his concept of habitus and how subordinate/dominant positions could impact on the dimension of power (Bourdieu, 1977), Fligstein and McAdam instead focus more on social skills, challenger/incumbent dimensions, and

the wider implications of inter-field communication and change. Their strategic action field (SAF) concept thus allows for inter- and intra- dialogues with a variety of conceptual frameworks and disciplines (Hess, 2012), including the work of Bourdieu.

Accordingly, if the aim of the *'Burma Movement'*, in all forms, was to strive for democracy within the country, then it could be considered to be a single field of strategic action; the nonstate challenger to the incumbent power of the state field, as represented by the military junta. This would also then make the movement broadly compatible with the political process models of social movement theory (Tilly, 1979). However, while there had been continual opposition to the military government throughout their tenure, due to the intentional political, physical and communicational isolation of the country the subsequent external change (in the face of mounting pressure for a democratic constitution and free elections) was the prospect of activists being physically able, and internationally supported, to conduct democracy-related activities in an alternative social space. This would then account for the various branches/definitions of the *'Burma Movement'* as previously identified in Chapter Two (grassroots, exiled, border-based etc) and, according to Fligstein and McAdam's model, interlinked SAFs within the wider umbrella *'Burma Movement'* field. Various other fields (international government policy, development aid, regional business concerns, journalistic enquiry, academic research etc.) all then operated in the surrounding space, overlapping with the various *'Burma Movement'* SAFs to varying degrees. Due to government sanctions, cross-border donor restrictions and geographically-specific operational concerns, at a functional level the Thai-based *'Burma Movement'* was practically, as well as conceptually, sufficiently

distinct from the alternative '*Burma Movement*' fields as to constitute a functionally separate (although conceptually interdependent) SAF, rather than a distinct nonstate field challenging the state field in significantly alternative ways.

The exogenous shocks that then caused all of the related '*Burma Movement*' SAFs to rapidly develop (related to both the international community and the military) were then the attention gained by 2007's Saffron Revolution and, shortly after, the government's response to 2008's Cyclone Nargis when it occurred just before the constitutional referendum. The game-changing circumstance that would alter/overtake the situation (what Fligstein and McAdam call a 'crisis') was then the 2010 election. According to Fligstein and McAdam, once formed, a new SAF then not only requires mobilization, but, if it is to remain coherent, also requires social skills and operational governance. Once a field has achieved relative stability, it remains open to destabilization by new exogenous shocks, such as changes within related fields, outside invasion, or (macro) social influence (Hess, 2012). In the specific case of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' SAF, this ultimately related to the rapid decline in support after the election presented the illusion that the movement had fulfilled its primary purpose by succeeding in removing the military government. The final shock would then be Aung San Suu Kyi winning a by-election to secure a local parliamentary seat in April 2012, seemingly solidifying change and removing the need for an externally-based democratic movement.

Ultimately, the international perception of a '*Burma Movement*' victory and rapid, escalating positive change (e.g. Fuller, 2012; ICG, 2013; Telegraph, 2011) did not

seem to truly represent the complete picture, as there were more factors and perspectives entailed beyond removing the military, centralised democracy and the release of political prisoners. Subsequently, when analysing the interview data, the theories of both Bourdieu and Fligstein and McAdam would be applied simultaneously. Although the initial research methodology would be designed around a broadly Bourdieusian model, the potential to reflect and integrate other perspectives at the analysis stage was always included through an inbuilt commitment to reflexivity. Fligstein and McAdam's use of SAFs and resources, although similar to Bourdieu's notions of field and capital, would ultimately offer a wider and more flexible analytical application of greater relevance to the context; in particular, how the SAF(s) (as constructed by the participants) could be affected through overlapping with, or being influenced by, the fields constructed by others who had also decided to express an interest in their issues. Their concept of social skill is also an important addition, as it not only acknowledges the significance of application of capital and resources (as opposed to just their acquisition), but allows for participants to engage in multiple arenas simultaneously.

With theories identified that could be applied to offer original insight into the workings of the context, and assist with solving the puzzle of the significance of apparent organisational and cultural divisions of ethnicity, gender and leadership, two research questions were developed that could, potentially, help to explain the particular intricacies and nuances on the border.

- While the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' functioned on the border in a very broad sense as a single field, various internal and external forces that considered different, conflicting final goals to be at stake were also present. Could these have led to actors actually being engaged within two (or more) overlapping, but contradictory and distinct, strategic action fields?
- Were desirable capital/resources and social skills agreed, or were there (at least) two concurrent, but opposing, perspectives that were informing the practices and perceptions of those involved?

The next step, therefore, was to develop a methodology and research tool that, through directly engaging with and gathering information from those involved, would enable these questions to be explored.

METHODOLOGY: DESIGN, DISCRETION, DELIVERY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Introduction to the Research Situation

As the context and approach have now been established, this chapter moves on to the theoretical and practical steps involved in the design and implementation of the methodology and research tool. Bourdieu's analysis of the scope for the application of his tools within a practical research methodology is considered, alongside the need to construct a framework that would be consistent, reflexive, and compatible with social movement perspectives (Fligstein and McAdam's work not being available prior to the design and implementation of the field research). To assess the extent to which a similar approach would be appropriate in the Thai-Burma border context, Bourdieu's own implementation guidelines for researching *The Weight of the World* (1999) are examined. Certain aspects are subsequently embraced, while others are discarded as being impractical in the context. Webb's five key research approaches (explicit intentions, clarified censorship boundaries, consistent first-person descriptions, knowledgeable interviewer, objectivity) are then all explored and incorporated into the provisional design.

A nominally multiple-model approach is eventually chosen, involving an icebreaking demographic questionnaire immediately followed by semi-structured interviews, with subjects encouraged to talk freely rather than follow particular questions. The rationale behind selecting the most appropriate interview sample, with ultimately only two ethnicities being included (Arakan and Pa-Oh), is then explored. The decision to present quotations attributed only to age range and gender, rather than as individual testimonies, is explained, which also then helps to offer a clearer framework from which to investigate divisions related to field/SAF, capital/resources, ethnicity, gender and leadership. Demographic statistics are revealed, before I reflexively consider the ethics of writing about the Thai-Burma border context, and assess my own position within the research.

Methodology in the Theoretical Context and *'The Weight of the World'*

As has been established, Bourdieu developed theoretical tools by utilising interdisciplinary approaches, which he then used as his lens for the investigation of a wide array of research areas and social phenomena. He constantly attempted to both address, and eventually go beyond, seemingly polarized concepts (subjective-objective, theoretical-practical, quantitative-qualitative, symbolic-material etc.), while endeavouring to avoid the simplification of reality by his use of very precise and complex language. Bourdieu ultimately attempted to combine social theory and the logic of practice through his application of the theories of habitus and symbolic capital. He considered the concept of habitus to be of assistance to the explanation of specific choices, but also felt that it had utility beyond decision-making (Bourdieu, 1990a). Actions and decisions that may be subconscious or

implicit are subsequently enabled and validated by conforming not to stated rules, but to the overriding organic whole of the norms and beliefs of the accepted habitus; there is *'orchestration but no conductor'* as it *'operates purposively without purpose'* (Bourdieu, 1990a: 1038 and 1039). Bourdieu's conceptualisation then enabled understanding from diverse practical perspectives, involving the integrated (including capital and functionality), differentiated (symbolic capital and violence, conflict) and fragmented (illusion, strategy and habitus) (Everett, 2002).

Essentially, if habitus is to have practical utility, the objects of the study (the social actors) need to possess a degree of knowledge and awareness about their situation that can not only connect their actions to the social system, but reflect the dimensions within it. Subjects are therefore not only required to actively participate within the research, but to be willing to be objectified; although not necessarily conscious of it themselves, they could potentially become the source of a viable explanation for a struggle or phenomenon (or particular aspect within) that is central to the study (Hamel, 1997). If the individual or group possesses the required attributes, their perspectives can then be seen to interpret and transcend their own particular situation, ultimately using their practical knowledge to reveal the dimensions of the underlying representation. This then will, ideally, confirm the sociological knowledge hypothesis presented prior to the field research. While such descriptions of Bourdieu's theory of practice and conceptual tools make them appear extremely relevant for investigating a context as layered as the Thai-Burma border, they do not provide a direct practical framework in which research could be conducted; *'Bourdieu's theoretical arguments are simply not articulated in empirical*

terms' (Aschaffenburg and Maas, 1997: 584). Additionally, Bourdieu's earlier writings also do not have consistent principles or rules in relation to practical application. While this leaves the researcher open to apply their own methods and formulate their own interpretation, the lack of formal steps makes it hard to judge if their research design has been adequately constructed, or implemented in a suitably rigorous way (Hamel, 1997). This doubt need not be seen as a hindrance, however, but an essential component of the methodology -

Sociology... demands of itself the means for raising doubts... about all the pre-constructions and all the presuppositions, both those of the researcher and the respondent, which operate so that the research study relationship is often only established on the basis of an agreement at the unconscious level. (Bourdieu, 1996: 29)

The rigour then lies *'in the permanent control of the point of view, which is continually affirmed in the details of the writing'* (Bourdieu, 1996: 33). However, as it is impossible to conclusively prove the degree to which the habitus serves as an unconscious guide or influence on behaviour, analysis must then rely upon the agreements and inter-relationships of subjects rather than solid facts (Everett, 2002). The strength of the interpretation - including objective analysis of the position of subjects from an appropriate research distance, the consolidation of the practical perspectives and sociological knowledge, the objective relationships revealed and theories abstracted - all ultimately rely upon the quality of the final writing (Bourdieu, 1993).

One early methodological approach Bourdieu suggested was a two-fold exploration. The first examination should be of the components within the field that can be objectively analysed through observation, measurement and mapping, e.g. physical resources, power structures, relevant capital (Wacquant, 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The second wave is then concerned with phenomenology; the social and symbolic meaning attributed to the perception and appreciation of seemingly mundane activities, competencies and knowledge, and how they influence human interactions, histories and dispositions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Everett, 2002). However, in later works Bourdieu radically transformed his methodological approach, instead advising practitioners to *'go into the street and question the first-comer'* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 176). This new method worked on the basis that the subjects' multi-dimensional knowledge of their own actions and perspectives (historical, personal, psychological etc.) would be sufficient for the researcher to interpret meaning, providing greater understanding of that information and the objective relationships involved, in a form that could then be abstracted into theory. This would eventually provide an explanation of relevance to the researcher's hypothesis, a hermeneutic posture that is essentially *'a point of view on a point of view'* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 103). For the practitioner, this creates a duality of needing to construct an operational framework where they can not only acknowledge their observations objectively, but also embrace their own subjective thoughts in relation to them.

Bourdieu's evolved methodology considered the direct participation of subjects to be provoked by the interviewer, who then, in turn, must accompany the subject

through their journey of responses, rather than attempting to navigate the discussion in pre-determined directions (Hamel, 1997). It is only through this denouncing of presumptions and the alleged truths of common sense that principles are revealed -

Social agents do not have innate knowledge of what they are and what they do; more precisely, they do not necessarily have access to the reason for their discontent or their disquiet and the most spontaneous declarations can, without aiming to mislead, express quite the opposite of what they appear to say. (Bourdieu, 1996: 29)

As the purpose is to transcend the perspectives of the individual in favour of the wider principles, the key characteristics become not those of personality, but of dispositions within social space (Hamel 1997). By acknowledging both the limitations of the consciousness of the subjects and the relationships between theory/reality, interviewer/interviewee, those following Bourdieu's methodology should aim to avoid becoming controlled by social factors. This should become possible by using their research and analysis tools to not only assess themselves, but also the overriding '*objectifying gaze of sociology*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 214). However, Bourdieu's explanations are still missing frameworks or application guidelines for researchers to follow, making it difficult to design practical research that will conform to his theories.

Bourdieu published *The Weight of the World* in 1993 (translated/edited in 1999), a large-scale, empirical interview-based project on the daily struggles of working class life in times of major economic and cultural upheaval (Kenway and McLeod, 2004).

Throughout the recording of the multi-perspective points of view, particular focus was given to the critical insights of those who felt powerless and poor within society, the '*lucidity of the excluded*' (McNay, 1999: 107). Bourdieu presented the process to the interviewees as an opportunity for them to testify -

...to explain themselves... to construct their viewpoint on themselves and on the world and to identify the point, within this world, from which they see themselves and see the world, and become comprehensible, justified, and primarily for themselves. (Bourdieu, 1999: 915)

Each interview was subsequently recorded with not only the full transcript, but a preface to establish the context and an interpretation of the account. By presenting empirical perspectives on personal actions and the potential for transformation in a format accessible to the lay reader, Bourdieu claimed that the expressed insights made a richer contribution to popular consciousness and culture than those offered through drama or novels (Bourdieu, 1999). What makes this work especially interesting is that Bourdieu included a postscript chapter, entitled *Understanding* (first translated by Fowler in 1996), in which he explained and reflected upon his methodological approach. The ultimate purpose of using self-reflexivity is assumed to be to nurture a relationship between interviewer and subject that is based on respect and recognition, leading to reciprocal feelings of empathy and sympathy. From this position, private testimonials can be transformed into relevant and cathartic public knowledge, without the perceived betrayal of exploitation, embellishment or misrepresentation (Webb *et al*, 2002). By revealing not only his conceptual tools in practice, but his understanding of the entire research perspective, the chapter '*redefines the purpose of this work so that it goes beyond*

the presentation of empirical research, beyond, even, the authorized space for sociology'(Fowler, 1996: 1).

In Bourdieu's execution, the initial plan had been to use a large team of untrained people to conduct interviews within their own social groups (Bourdieu, 1999). It was subsequently found that the majority of their information was unusable due to over-identification and a lack of objectivity; they *'produced little more than sociolinguistic data, incapable of providing the means for their own interpretation'* (Bourdieu, 1999: 612). Interviews were therefore conducted by Bourdieu and his associates, who were *'free to choose their respondents from among or around people personally known to them'* (Bourdieu, 1999: 910). Subjects were encouraged to speak freely and not be constrained by a pre-determined question framework, on the basis that this would reveal greater truths, as *'people's readings of their situation are founded on patterned socially generated classifications of the world with multiple associations of a moral and aesthetic kind'* (Fowler, 1996: 11). According to the methodology, neither subject nor interviewer should be imposed on the other, either through viewpoint, the impact of the social structure upon the interview process, or the personality/demeanour of the interviewer (Kenway and McLeod, 2004).

The methodology of *The Weight of the World*, involving academic objectivity combined with sympathy for the subjects, has not been universally accepted. It has been read as flawed and contradictory (Rabinow, 1996), *'self-encapsulated and singular, and thus inevitably rather self-regarding'* (McRobbie, 2002: 136) and even

as the point where Bourdieu's sociological model implodes (Martuccelli, 1999). If individual voices only reflect personal experience and do not necessarily represent wider truths, then Bourdieu's interviews are *'mere reportage of degrees of misfortune, involving lives torn from context and lacking in thick description'* (McRobbie, 2002: 136). There was also the argument that, as subjects were chosen from within known circles, then interviews conducted, transcribed and edited to be consistent with one particular interpretation, that the final project was effectively manufactured to conform to the initial assumptions (Couldry, 2005). *The Weight of the World* professed to be reflexive, but was *'nonetheless firmly and unreflexively positioned within the field of sociology'* (Kenway and McLeod, 2004: 534) and, through holding a position related to politics and intellectual orientation, stood *'in sharp contrast to the more generalized contemporary form of reflexive identity as articulated by theorists of reflexive modernity'* (Kenway and McLeod, 2004: 535). Fowler (1996), although largely supportive of Bourdieu's approach, felt that his symbolic violence-related rejection of methods other than ethnographic fieldwork, especially unstructured interviews, undermined his earlier research, where multiple research methods were employed (Fowler, 1996). The quality of the depth and analysis of the included interviews was mixed, with a few alleged to contain *'little reference to existing work and wider sociological debates, and where instead there is an almost sanctimonious relation to the voice of the speaker'* (McRobbie, 2002: 135). Consequently, a gap remained between the theoretical sociological framework, reflexive methodology and the fleeting truths of the interview process (Bourdieu, 1999), which if anything the explanations in *Understanding* sought to exacerbate. However, the methodology of *Understanding* remains the nearest thing

to practical instructions that Bourdieu offered the practitioner; the implications of attempting to apply the above in the Thai-Burma context will be further explored in the research tool design.

Bourdieu's Methodological Guidelines in Application

As summarized by Webb *et al*, *Understanding* identified and elaborated upon the five key methodological approaches utilised within *The Weight of the World* that are required to produce (what Bourdieu considered to be) a piece of self-reflexive research (Webb *et al*, 2002: 55-6).

- 1) So that the reader can understand the aim of the project and why it is being conducted, the intentions and procedural principles should be made explicit.
- 2) The boundaries of censorship, of what can be said during the initial interview and/or edited later, must be clarified.
- 3) The need for a consistent point of view that can maintain the essence of the initial account, even though elements (irony, body language etc.) will be absent from the final transcription. The original first-person descriptions of the subject should be preserved, not replaced with the detached third-person forms of the interviewer/analyst.
- 4) Interviewers must be very knowledgeable about their subjects' social context, both through research and a history of direct interaction. They should be familiar with the subjects, who will be selected on the basis of being '*people of knowledge or people to whom (the interviewer) could be introduced by people of knowledge*' (Bourdieu, 1999: 908)
- 5) The interviewer needs to acknowledge, but attempt to objectify, their own habitus and social position, to then be able to detach themselves from their

own preconceived values, notions and perspectives. Their initial perspective should instead be *'based on prior knowledge of the realities that the research may reveal'* (Bourdieu, 1999: 916).

These guidelines subsequently provided a very helpful framework when attempting to solidify the boundaries, limitations and ethics of conducting practical research on the Thai-Burma border. Webb's points will therefore be referred to throughout the explanation of the research design, although the sequence will not be followed chronologically.

The most notable departure in the final research design from the format of *The Weight of the World* was subsequently the eventual decision to arrange all quotations in relation to appropriate themes, rather than presenting each interview as an individual case study. This was partly due to the security necessities of the context, but also to avoid the aforementioned criticisms (McRobbie, 2002; Fowler, 1996; Rabinow, 1996) that the unstructured interviewing and symbolic violence concentrations of *The Weight of the World* resulted in a verging towards over-confident, contradictory, self-regarding reportage. An approach was ultimately chosen that would combine a nominal element of statistical collation with direct interaction, consistent both with the reflexive guidelines of *Understanding* and Bourdieu's earlier *'methodological polytheism'* (Wacquant, 1998: 5). Due to the security concerns of the context, and consistent with the fourth point for self-reflexive research (Webb *et al*, 2002), subjects would either come from within my sphere of acquaintance, or be the friends and colleagues of existing contacts who

were willing to offer their reassurance/personal endorsement that participating would be safe.

Consistent with Bourdieu's aforesaid second point of reflexivity (Webb *et al*, 2002), it was deemed essential that absolutely everything that was said would be guaranteed as anonymous and confidential, with any specifics of names, organisations, locations etc. censored to protect the security of respondents, both in Thailand and in their home communities; quotes would be divided into topic discussions and presented accurately, but attributed only to their age bracket and gender. Not only would this remove the potential for identification, but draw attention more to *what* was said rather than who it was said *by*, transcending specific personal perspectives and individual signifiers in the interests of revealing social dispositions and wider principles (Hamel, 1997). The sole exception to complete anonymity was in relation to ethnic-minority traditions, as this was the one area in which responses related to a specific area of experience rather than a wider cultural or issue-related indicator. For the most part, however, it was considered that the underlying themes and truths inherent within the expressed opinions were of more significance than the demographics of the speaker (Macdonald *et al*, 2002).

As Fries asserted that *'the interplay of structure and agency are best revealed through a reflexive combination of research methods'* (Fries, 2009: 336), an approach was devised where quantitative and qualitative research would be conducted concurrently, during a single face-to-face encounter, rather than consecutively (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). While a qualitative approach consisting of semi-

structured interviews was decided as being of the greatest relevance for the bulk of the research, in application it was feared that some subjects might prove to be too inexperienced at being interviewed, too shy, or just insufficiently confident in their opinions and/or language skills to share their views or histories to any significant degree. As Bourdieu saw his logic of research as *'inseparably empirical and theoretical'* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 160), it was considered that the inclusion of a short quantitative questionnaire, consisting of demographic questions in conjunction with Likert-type scales, could be beneficial during the interview process as a precursor to the wider qualitative questions. The specific attributes to be included in the questionnaire were discussed with ethnic-minority colleagues, with a particular focus on how important various forms of capital were considered to be to the positions that ethnic-minority people were allowed to hold within their organisations or communities. A two-page questionnaire was drafted and piloted, then translated into Burmese. To ensure clarity and consistency of meaning, it was also then back-translated prior to implementation (both English and Burmese versions included as Appendix Bi and Bii). In application, this would then allow for the subject to begin the interview with non-threatening demographic questions (Denscombe, 2007), presented in the language of their choice, pointing to their preferred answers if necessary. Subsequently, even those with limited or unsure English could respond, confident that the questions, and answers they chose, were being correctly understood. While there was the potential for this to be jarring, it actually served as an effective ice-breaker to establish trust before more qualitative questions were asked, even if some subjects were unwilling or unable to give extensive responses. Consistent with Bourdieu's view that *'statistical analysis is the*

only means of manifesting the structure of the social space' (Bourdieu, 1985: 725), it would therefore be possible to collect demographic and statistical data from all subjects, to assist with perceptions of general trends. However, it was always accepted that the quantitative information would only act as a minor subsidiary to the qualitative data (Denscombe, 2007), and was never expected to be viable for significant statistical analysis. Asking these questions then enabled interviewees who were willing, but ultimately not confident enough to offer qualitative answers of depth, to effectively be screened out of the main research; yet they could still make a contribution without the danger of making them feel they had somehow failed or been rejected. It also helped to break away from the exclusive use of subjective descriptions, and the potential trap of presuming that the *'self-conscious explanation for behaviour sufficiently explains it'* (Fries, 2009: 338).

For the bulk of the interviews, general questions were prepared concerning the general areas for exploration, but were to serve only as indicators rather than a firm structure (Appendix C). The aim was to conduct the interviews reflexively, with an emphasis on *'how, who, and where' questions while avoiding 'why' questions'* (Fries, 2009: 344), but subjects were invited to treat it more as a dialogue and raise topics as they saw fit, regardless of whether these were consistent with the planned order and/or expected subject areas (Macdonald *et al*, 2002). Additionally, questions were asked without reference to Bourdieu or his concepts, as the use of theoretically specific terms could lead to confusion and/or the unintentional leading of the subjects towards particular answers. This would also leave the information open to be analysed in accordance with alternative theories later on, should more

appropriate approaches be identified during the post-fieldwork phase. To fit within reflexive guidelines, it was assumed that all interviews would consist of *'subjective accounts at a particular point in time'* (Fries, 2009: 344), rather than reflecting ultimate truths or infallible facts. Interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed later, both to save time and to allow for the conversation to flow unhindered, on the understanding that these would never be released or used for any other purpose.

Selecting the Sample, Setting the Boundaries

From the outset, the intention of the research was to gain an insight into the grassroots border-based movement through the opinions and perspectives of those directly involved; the central voice therefore being their own views on their own situation, not of others who had become associated with it (Denscombe, 2007). Subsequently, subjects would only be those from ethnic-minority areas of Burma, working on the Thai border, on Burma-related issues. This then excluded ethnic-minority people who had come to Thailand to be migrant workers or students, as well as volunteers/staff of other nationalities (including Burman), INGOs, academics, journalists, government officials, international campaigners or donors.

As previously established, there were a great many different ethnicities working within organisations on the Thai-Burma border. If the research was to provide meaningful insight beyond purely personal preferences, as well as being logistically feasible rather than bogged down in extraneous issues, it was felt that subjects should come from a limited number of ethnic-minority identities (distinct from

geographic states); for ease of execution, ideally only two. However, it was never the intention to pit organisations, genders or ethnicities against each other; rather than comparing and contrasting, the hope was that illumination could instead be sought through the relaying and interpretation of observed and expressed practical knowledge (Hamel, 1998). In the interests of both visibility and variety of respondents, only ethnic-minorities with multiple border-based organisations, as well as evident productivity and a demonstrated commitment to inter-ethnic involvement, would be considered. To avoid overlaps with existing research, priority would be given to ethnicities who were under-represented in the academic literature, as well as those that did not have considerable international representation via expat communities. Additionally, to maximize the significance of identity signifiers such as ethnicity and gender related to the national context, it was felt that respondents should have been raised according to the religious principles of the official (and majority) religion of Burma, Buddhism. This then removed those from ethnic-minority groups of predominantly Christian beliefs (e.g. Kachin, Chin), as well as those where considerable tensions arose from differing religious principles being held within one ethnicity (e.g. Karen). The above stipulations, combined with the relative ease of access to a sufficient volume of willing respondents, led to the final selection of the Arakan and Pa-Oh. Although geographically and culturally distinct, both ethnicities displayed similar levels of marginalisation and distrust in historical power structures, be they military, Burman, colonial, feudal or occupying forces during wartime. Subsequently, each seemed to question the honesty and integrity of rulers, politicians or people of influence who were Burman, or, to a lesser extent, not from their own ethnic-minority group. However, their selection was not

in *any* way meant to imply that they were of greater significance or interest than other ethnicities, or that their views were necessarily representative of people from Burma in general (Mason, 2002). Given the context and a need for continuity, it was decided that respondents should all be post-'88 Generation'. This would exclude those who had directly been involved in the previous major uprising; partly to delineate the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' as distinct (rather than resulting) from a 'protest movement', but also since they might either be unable to return to the country and/or were eligible to settle (or had previously settled) in a third country. This would be applied practically as including only those under the age of 40. All interviews would be conducted by myself, with the assistance of a fully briefed translator (of the subject's choosing) if required.

Although the intended sample could be defined relatively easily, the various logistics of implementing the research presented considerable challenges in relation to subject access and openness. It is important to stress the extent to which obtaining access was a rare privilege. While many of the ethnic-based organisations seemingly had a public presence (websites, published reports etc.), the vast majority were unregistered within Thailand. Staff were often in the country illegally, or had obtained their status under a different pretext (student visa, migrant worker registration, hill tribe affiliation etc.). False names were commonplace, faces in published photographs were often distorted, the only listed office addresses were invariably post office box numbers. It was an underground network whose participants lived in fear of being identified within Thailand, and the bribes, imprisonment or deportation that might accompany their discovery. Even more

significantly, they ran the risk of having their work associated with them inside Burma; not only could this potentially lead to issues if they tried to return, but, if their work was particularly provocative, they worried that their family members inside the country may be at risk. Revealing details about themselves to someone outside of their trusted circle was not something that was done lightly. Thus organising an interview with those involved was considerably more complicated than just choosing whomever I'd like, dropping them an email and arranging a time. At the instigation of the research I had nearly five years of involvement within the grassroots movement, with an established reputation as someone safe to communicate with and seek assistance from, yet it still took several months to arrange and conduct a sufficient number of interviews. Accordingly, given the difficulty of sourcing willing interviewees, and the potential for information to be gathered from them that had never before been documented, when a subject did consent to be involved it was considered ethically essential that they should feel able to express themselves widely, freely and in their own words (Mason, 2002). For the research to be relevant, the interview data would have to genuinely reflect the views and perspectives of the subjects, not just my interpretation of them.

Collating and Presenting the Data, Considering the Reflexive Position

Over a period of five months, a total of twenty-two usable interviews were conducted. An additional two interviews were aborted at the demographic stage, one for being of an alternative ethnicity, the other a different religion. A further one was discarded on language skill grounds, as the inconsistency of their answers implied that multiple questions had been misunderstood. All bar four of the

interviews were conducted in English; on each occasion, the translator was also a subject and thus was already well briefed about the format and purpose of the research. All subjects gave full consent for their quotations to be published academically; however, due to concerns about their security, it was essential to guarantee that any personally-identifiable factors (specifics of names, host organisations, home communities etc.) would be removed to preserve their anonymity. Although a relatively small sample, it provided a cross-section that included those primarily working with youth, women, environmental causes, human rights, education, political parties and documentation. Not only was there a range of ages, educational attainment and organisational positions, but also diverse personal experience; subjects included freed political prisoners, victims of forced labour, armed resistance members, former monks and an ex-policeman. The final total consisted of more men than women, more Arakan than Pa-Oh. While this was unplanned, no ethnic-minority or gender-based sample proved too small to be workable; given the aforementioned variety of backgrounds and positions of respondents, this was not considered to be prohibitive in relation to the final analysis.

The statistical information was collated using both Excel and PAWS Statistics, to allow ease of tabulation, representation and correlation. In the final demographics, male respondents outnumbered female 64% to 36%, with Arakan similarly outnumbering Pa-Oh 68% to 32%. The majority, 45%, described themselves as being staff, with 32% identifying as interns/trainees and 23% as leaders. Educational attainment was split between university (32%), NGO school/internship (32%) and

high school (28%), with 4% each attending further education college or postgraduate study. Age was similarly dispersed, with 32% each being 26-29 and 30-34, 18% were 18-21, 14% 22-25 and 4% from 35-40. Although too small a sample to be considered capable of representing any definite trends, collated results showed that there were no stated significant gender or ethnicity splits in relation to the importance of age, gender, years of activism, or being led by their own gender or ethnicity, all of which had a median view of being only *slightly important*. Skills, personality and qualifications emerged as *very important*, but only self confidence was considered *essential*. Financial status was the only attribute considered *unimportant*. Consistent with the previously outlined third point of Bourdieu's reflexivity (Webb *et al*, 2002), quotations from the qualitative questions were transcribed and presented exactly as said, with no corrections to vocabulary or grammar; the only exceptions were when details needed to be censored to protect organisations, people or specifics not of relevance to the point(s) being made. Although the individual narratives were deconstructed, care was taken to ensure that the content was not distorted out of context, and that the original intended meaning remained clear.

The most challenging of Bourdieu's reflexive research points (Webb *et al*, 2002) was the fifth, due to it being hard to prove. Before being able to analyse or write-up findings, it was subsequently necessary to consciously evaluate my subjectivity and personal position in relation to the wider research. Like Bourdieu, I am not primarily a sociologist by training, but instead incorporated my previous academic experience (including philosophy, management, psychotherapy and cultural studies) to

formulate a new perspective that happened to evolve into being predominantly sociological. I do not claim to be an expert on Burma's culture(s), history, economy or politics and, more importantly, I categorically do *not* believe that people from Burma are, or should be, dependent on incomers to explain, or solve the issues within, their own country. Throughout my time on the Thai-Burma border my role - as an organisational development specialist, then later, strategic planning advisor, supported by a local-level stipend from an international development charity - was to provide practical assistance and alternative perspectives so that the grassroots people I worked with could achieve their goals; I was absolutely *not* there to tell them what those goals should be, or to take ownership of their causes. Significantly, I was also *not* perceived by respondents as a donor, formal teacher, or holding any significant affiliation or power that would have obligated their amenability or commanded particular responses; I was simply someone who could offer support, on their terms, if/when it was requested. My involvement in the context came about purely as it was where my qualifications and experience were considered to be the most relevant, not because of any burning prior emotional connection to the people, their plight, international policy or activism in general. While it mattered very much to me that I could be useful to those I worked alongside, I was always a foreigner, and thus never a significant stakeholder or a key player in their fight for democracy; the suggestion that I ever could be would be both offensive and absurd. Ultimately, I was enough of an ignorant incomer to be able to ask questions about their cultures/beliefs/experiences without drifting into patronisation, but also a sufficiently established and trusted insider to not only have significant access to

underground activists, but for there to be a realistic expectation that their responses would be relatively open and honest.

Throughout the conducting of the literature review, I was aware that I was not a completely objective observer. My knowledge about the Burma situation had been gained through reading news articles, organisational reports and (to a lesser extent) academic material, but in conjunction with immersion into the political positions, social interactions, personal opinions and working practices of the grassroots people themselves. Logistical practicalities aside, it would have been unfair to attempt to conduct research inside the country, amongst international workers/academics, or Burman (as opposed to ethnic-minority) groups, as my perspectives would not have been sufficiently rooted in personal experience or observance to provide insights of value; they may even have been tainted by unintentional prejudice and subjectivity in favour of the grassroots people. However, as the research design eventually only included two ethnicities (Arakan and Pa-Oh), both of whom I had worked with extensively, I was confident that I could maintain an objective position in relation to them. Throughout the process I do not believe that I held significantly biased opinions about either (positive or negative), nor did I have a preference for one over the other.

Bourdieu expected that the conducting and writing of reflexive research should –

...reveal all the elements necessary for the objective analysis of the position of the person questioned and for the understanding of his attitudes, without establishing with him the objectivizing distance that would reduce him to the

state of entomological curiosity; to adopt a viewpoint as close as possible to his without, however, projecting oneself unduly into this alter ego who always remains, whether one likes it or not, an object, in order to make oneself abusively the subject of the latter's world view. (Bourdieu *et al*, 1999: 8)

Although care was taken to not unduly inject my own perspectives and knowledge into the interview proceedings, if a truly self-reflexive lens is adopted then there were probably times when this did indeed occur. My own understanding of an answer may have informed follow-on questions and directed the conversation in particular ways, thereby inadvertently overlooking other potential avenues. It is possible that I jumped to conclusions when vague answers were given, filling in gaps in ways that made sense within my own habitus, rather than considering alternatives more relevant to the subjects' backgrounds and experience. I might have missed potential leads and areas for exploration as their relevance was not immediately apparent to me. My objective relations may have emerged as *'relations of symbolic power which express themselves in the interaction in the form of rhetorical strategies'* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2002: 258). Although never intentionally, at times I probably projected myself and/or over-empathised to the detriment of objectivity, or objectified through undue distancing. While values or facts reported/concluded from field research will inevitably have been influenced by the beliefs and perspectives of the researcher (Snape and Spencer, 2003), given the history of the context I felt it was especially important that I did not inadvertently hijack or distort their stories. Consistent with Bourdieu's suggestion that the researcher should *'strive to erase, through his writing, any trace liable to indicate the factors that govern the hermeneutics underlying sociological knowledge'* (Hamel,

1998: 15), the use of topic-centric, non-linear presentation rather than individual narratives helped to ensure that the predominant voices were those of the subjects, rather than being diluted with my questions or summarized interpretations.

The goal of conducting fieldwork within the grassroots movement, with people who were already comfortable enough with my presence and involvement to speak relatively openly, was to gather new information about their perspectives, experiences and operations that was absent from the existing literature. Presenting their quotations collated according to subject matter aimed to transcend individual accounts of the '*Burma Movement*', instead conveying the related internal and external influences, the underlying division of fields, constructions of capital, and the roles of ethnicity, gender and leadership. Holding a reflexive research position then meant that, when Bourdieu's theories alone proved restrictive during the analysis phase, that Fligstein and McAdam's theories could also be embraced without undermining the theoretical foundations of the research design. This chapter should, hopefully, have provided enough explanation to be consistent with Bourdieu's first self-reflexivity requirement (Webb *et al*, 2002) of making intentions and procedures explicit.

DIVIDED FIELDS, DIVERGENT RESOURCES

Introduction to Combining the Theory and Analysis

In this chapter the theories of Bourdieu, in combination with those of Fligstein and McAdam, are applied to the context, integrating the interview data with the formation and exploration of field and resource-related hypotheses. While certain universal goals, considered to be agreed by all of those involved with Burma-related issues, are identified, there are implications of assuming that these alone would present the *'Burma Movement'* as essentially representing a single functional field. The importance of considering multiple coexisting and interlinked fields of strategic action is acknowledged, alongside the significance of recognising differing perceptions of what is ultimately at stake. The interview data is subsequently analysed, leading to the conceptualisation of two opposing SAFs; the *United Burma Movement*, aspiring towards a unified country under the democratic (Burman) leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi (involvement in an improved state field), and the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement*, concerned more with ethnic-minority autonomy and community mobilisation (involvement with alternative nonstate fields). Two divergent orientations of resources and social skills are also theorized as concurrently present, the *Internationally-Influenced* (favouring macro-based

interventions, standardized educational qualifications and conforming to international systems of operation) and the *Community/Traditional-Influenced* (valuing micro-based change, practical engagement and traditional culture), with the respective positions of various activities and approaches indicatively mapped. Symbolic resources are also acknowledged, alongside the potential damage that can be caused when INGO assumptions are misaligned with local values. The relative differences between the objectives and perspectives of *issue-based and identity-focused* organisations are then explored. The research questions are ultimately shown to be broadly supported by the interview data, with the lack of recognition of these underlying issues being acknowledged as sources of conflict. Not only were tensions revealed as present, but also (at least partially) as the result of the contradictory expectations, advice and stipulations of international parties.

Defining the 'Burma Movement' Field(s)

As already explored in Chapter Two, from the outset there were certain central themes that apparently defined the *'Burma Movement'* in the collective consciousness of activists, politicians, and press alike. To be able to move beyond generalities, as well as address the research questions and make an original contribution, the following analysis is therefore based on the data gathered during the field research; i.e. the opinions of those who were directly involved on the border, with all of their subjectivity and potential misunderstandings accepted (*their* truth according to *their* perspectives), rather than external analysis, press reports or existing scholarly works. Upon being asked what they felt Burma-related activism groups (in all their various forms and locations) were hoping to achieve, the

interviewees consistently stated the same general goals that they considered to be universally agreed as desirable by all of those involved.

Table 5. 1
Perceived Universally Accepted Aims of the 'Burma Movement'

UNIVERSAL BURMA CAUSES/GOALS
Free, Fair, Democratic National and Local Elections
New Constitution <i>(free from enshrined military power)</i>
Release of All Political Prisoners
Laws to Protect Basic Rights <i>(such as free expression/assembly/association, end to land confiscation, censorship etc.)</i>
Improved Education, Healthcare, Sanitation etc. for the General Population
Addressing of, and Accountability for, Human Rights Abuses and Corruption
Tougher Control/Fairer Distribution of Profits from National Assets/Resources
Need for Trainings to Promote Awareness, Skills and Engagement <i>(especially for youth and women)</i>

If the above were considered as the key signifiers of what the 'Burma Movement' represented, this effectively would then allow the term to include any person or organisation who, in any way, worked towards or supported their actualization. They would also then represent the boundaries of the 'Burma Movement' as a single conceptual entity, or field, which then contained everyone who was involved in removing the military from power. While conveniently concise and coherent for international news reporting and campaign rhetoric, given the intricacies and contradictions of the context the simplicity of merely not refuting any of the above general goals did not necessarily present a workable definition for a solitary, meaningfully united field in a working sense. To determine if there were significant

divergences in the perceived aims and purpose of the *'Burma Movement'*, and determine what these might be, the first logical step was to ask the interview subjects to define the term.

The subjects subsequently gave a wide variation of explanations about what they felt the *'Burma Movement'* represented, and whether they even felt they were part of it. Some thought it included everyone who was actively supportive towards the Burma cause, regardless of location or nationality, although direct involvement was considered to be more effective.

Whoever can understand our situation, do something for us, works for Burma groups, on the border or inside. (age bracket 22-25, Female)

I think it is all angles, on border, other countries, anyone involved in the cause. (18-21, M)

When I hear the term *'Burma Movement'* I think it includes all the actors. So not like the refugees, I see them as victims, but anyone who is active, not just those in or from Burma. (26-29, M)

Including every issue for Burma and everybody who works for Burma, but the most effective activities are inside Burma, working directly. As for other organisations around the world, working, they are unnecessary, but still useful. It is dependent to each other, inside and outside, supporting each other. (30-34, M)

This would be consistent with the concept of there being a general *'Burma Movement'* nonstate field that represented everyone engaged in challenging the state field of the military government. Others felt, however, that including the term

'Burma' was exclusionary, as they considered it to be marginalising towards the ethnic-minority peoples; essentially, the equivalent of using 'English' to mean 'British'.

'Burma' means just Burmese people, Burmans. We choose our ethnicity to be our identifier, we don't want to be Burmese. (30-34, F)

Usually it is Burmans who use the term *'Burma'*, they try to make it look like covering the whole country. But actually if you look at their main activities it is only in the big cities, Rangoon especially. (26-29, M)

Most of the people, whenever we mention the Burmese from Burma, they never consider the ethnic, they don't know the ethnics are living there. The ethnic people want to identify, say we are not *'Burmese'*. (30-34, M)

I think in the *'Burma Movement'*, most of the ethnic they are not feeling like the *'Burma Movement'* is our own movement, if we look most of the leaders are Burmans. We feel that we don't have equal opportunity like Burman. (26-29, M)

This would then imply that there were actors involved on the border who considered their actual aims to fall outside of the *'Burma Movement'* concept, making the particular SAF they were engaged in linked with the *'Burma Movement'* umbrella field, but not fully enclosed within it. Interestingly, while the use of 'Burma' and 'Burmese' could be contentious, 'Myanmar' was not dismissed as a negative term in itself. However, there did not appear to be accepted terms that could be neutrally used for the country and the nationality of its citizens.

'Burma' is the same as *'Burman'*. I don't like it. *'Myanmar'* means all of the ethnic people, *'all races'*. It is better, but people presume that means you support the military. (26-29, F)

Most of leaders consider that, if we become federal union, what name will we have. For *'Myanmar'*, it is complicated, whatever the use all the ethnics will complain. So they may have idea to choose new name. When they changed to the Republic of the Union of Burma, they not ask the people. (30-34, F)

Much as there was not an agreed name for what a free, united, democratic country would actually be called, when asked what the preferred name for the movement would be there were numerous suggestions. Many of the feelings about which terms were exclusionary proved to be contradictory, supporting the hypothesis that there was actually more than one SAF involved.

Instead of *'Burma Movement'*, I want to call it *'Nationalities Movement'*. Sometimes the name is very important for the people, the feeling. If we have *'Burma Movement'* we feel it is only recognised as by Burman people. For everyone, *'Grassroots Nationalities Movement, Union of Burma'*. (30-34, M)

I prefer *'Grassroots Movement of Burma'*, I don't mind to include *'Burma'*. (18-21, M)

If we talk about *'Panglong'* we also have a problem as not all ethnicities sign this, they could feel it not include them. The ethnicities who did sign could use it for power. (26-29, M)

As for the whole ethnicities in Burma, I would like to define that as *'Grassroots Nationalities Movement'*. We have a right to the same equal rights, the States, where is the Burma State? No, they cannot show. They want to show the whole thing is Burma, we cannot accept that. (30-34, F)

The term '*Grassroots Movement*' was considered to be more representative of multi-ethnic rather than solely Burman-led activities; it was deemed to include people from all levels of society rather than just those politically involved, but (consistent with the international campaign organisations and exile groups identified in Chapter Two) exclude those involved at a distance.

'Grassroots Movement' is including both inside and on the border, not in other countries. (22-25, F)

When we have the term '*Grassroots Movement*' we think about the underprivileged, people like farmers, not government. (26-29, M)

For people who know about Burma a lot, if they see '*Burma Grassroots Movement*' they know that we are included. (30-34, M)

While the '*Burma Movement*' could be partially defined by its international profile and political rhetoric, the goals of the '*Grassroots Movement*' were typically identified as more direct, practical, made *by* the local people and not *on behalf of* them.

For '*Grassroots Movement*', we need to work at grassroots level, not just the government or business with China. To get change, we have to push the higher levels. (26-29, M)

Especially we can see, vividly, the grassroots movement during the demonstrations and elections. The monks uprising, that started in the ethnic areas. It was led by the people inside, not the '*Burma Movement*'. (22-25, M)

For '*Grassroots Movement*', grassroots people should lead. For Burma issues, some of the people involved in other countries do not even know where

Burma is. They have not been there. Sometimes it is good, sometimes it is bad. They even do not know the real history and background, they still try to raise awareness. (30-34, F)

As the evidence showed a split in both the definition and name preference for a single movement, it became easier to attempt to delineate towards the hypothesis that the interview subjects were actually engaged in separate SAFs. While differences in practice and application could be recognised in organisational focus, priorities, participation and opportunities, it was not yet clear whether these theoretical '*Burma*' and '*Grassroots*' divergences were largely complementary (and thus SAFs under the '*Burma Movement*' umbrella) or in conflict (two or more SAFs that overlapped with, but also went beyond, the confines of the '*Burma Movement*' concept). At a practical level, if each approach could be considered as separate but equal, as national/international and community responses to the same problem, then implications for future collaboration were very different than if they were perceived as fundamentally opposed.

Throughout the interviews, accounts emerged of various tensions and issues arising when ethnic-minority organisations attempted to work with Burman groups, both inside the country and on the border. Suggestions for potential collaborations or discussions were invariably impinged upon by references to centuries of animosity and marginalisation, the results of which were still related as evident throughout civil society and central government policy. A particular source of conflict on the border was that the Burman rights-based groups - although acknowledged as also supporting the grassroots activities of their ethnic (albeit majority) nationality at a

community level - were (assumed to be) able to conduct much more of their work inside the country in the post-election climate.

Most of Burman people are directly working for their communities. In all of the ethnic groups, only the Burmans have a chance to organise inside Burma. (22-25, M)

Other groups can and should move back inside now. Only Burmese organisation, it is okay. Ethnic groups need to be here until there are less problems. (26-29, F)

Ethnic people, some can go back, most of the organisations in Thailand do not want to go inside Burma. Maybe because of the budget and their security; for Burmans, it is easier. (35-40, M)

If historical and contextual discrepancies could be surmounted, there were more specific issues related to perceptions of inequality. Burmans could be accused of acting as if they were superior to those from the ethnic-minority groups, with their interest in collaboration viewed with suspicion.

Especially Burman, whenever they work they want to be a leader. Even though we are working together with Burmese people, they always think they are higher class, they should be the leaders. (26-29, M)

When we work together with Burman-led organisations, we do not know how they think about us. We feel sometimes they are only working with us because there is something for them to gain. We have that feeling of being used. (30-34, M)

We have to use Burmese as our common language. Even when an ethnic group is working very hard on the task, they do not have the capability to explain it, they are not very articulate of what they are doing. But Burmese,

they can speak very good, very nice, but when you talk with them you know they are not working very hard, you are doing all the job. They are very cunning. (26-29, M)

As one specific example, while there was acknowledgement and respect for Aung San Suu Kyi's personal sacrifices and her contribution as an international peace icon, there were questions about her ability to represent the whole population as a working politician. In particular, there were doubts about her awareness of, or dedication to, ethnic-minority as well as Burman issues, and the surrounding implications of enforcing the illusion of unity.

It may be worse than before, because, now, most of the people are hoping that Aung San Suu Kyi can solve everything. But as far as we know, she never mentioned about for the ethnic issue, just only for her party, for Burmese people. (26-29, M)

She may become a leader, it will be okay, but now, not a leader. Maybe 75%, 80% will accept Aung San Suu Kyi. Ethnic groups will keep fighting. I would like her to be president, but in current situation, it will not be. (30-34, F)

Aung San Suu Kyi can't solve ethnic problems, ethnic conflict, nobody can solve. She is Burman, she cannot do. The solution is only justice and equality. (30-34, M)

However, there were also indications that, aside from ethnic-minority issues, the supposedly united central democracy movement was also not as unified as it initially appeared.

I think that Aung San Suu Kyi will not be able to be president, according to the situation. Most of the NLD members have so many problems among them,

among their members. Their party will become many political parties. Many other parties are working for human rights and democracy, NLD are not the only party for that, everyone can see. (22-25, F)

While there was an evident perceived ethnic-minority nationalities/Burman divide in priorities and parity, the lack of balanced media coverage was also seen as a considerable barrier to advancing ethnic-minority equality. However, insufficient awareness on the part of Burman activists and the international community was conceded (at least partially) as being the result of the limited opportunities for them to access such information, and not exclusively attributed to perceived agendas of marginalisation.

The journal, newspaper, they just mention the government-level news, the people just see the government level is changing. We do not have the link of the media at the community level, in villages, rural areas, so we cannot cover the human rights violations, but it is really happening. (26-29, M)

Most of the Burma issues that appear in the media is only concerned with Rangoon-based issue, Mandalay issue, Aung San Suu Kyi. How about the rest? Lots of the conflicts are happening in Kachin State, Shan State, refugees. Cyclone Giri, nobody heard about that. (30-34, F)

We always ask to the media people, *'You have responsibility, media should write everything'*. In our ethnic areas, lots of the problems, conflicts are happening. If the Burmese come to our area to work, even if they are sympathetic, willing to work for us, they cannot lead at grassroots level. They are not familiar with that area, those people, they will not understand everything. We need to take long time to explain issue, to understand. If the media wrote about us they would know. (26-29, F)

Many of the ethnic-minority interviewees repeatedly revealed views that implied that they felt Burman people, centralised politics and national media all considered them - their organisations, their issues and their cultures - to be less than equal to their Burman counterparts. Such views represented significant barriers to the actualisation of the assumed collective dream of a united country, either under the imminent leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi or at any point in the future.

Throughout the interviews there were concerns about how much the supposed changes inside the country were actually positively impacting on the lives of ethnic-minority people, and whether or not the situation would improve in time.

Even though the government announced that they are trying to change, to move forward, but in our ethnic state there is not change. Nothing has changed for us yet, only in Rangoon. (26-29, M)

We don't believe the government 100%, they talk something, is it true or not, we don't believe too much. We believe something as we are seeing changing. We worry that the government level is talking about human rights, but the community level is having human rights violations. (26-29, F)

Changing, yes, but is it good or not? I'm not sure yet about that. It's changing, the government, but they cannot change the grassroots, we need to wait for the effects of change at the grassroots. (18-21, M)

The government told the grassroots people that all land and water is owned by the government, so they can take, the people do not know they can stop. It is worse than before. Why don't they listen to our people? (30-34, M)

Alongside issues with centralised government policies, there were also problems relating to the internal, Burman-run NGOs that were supposed to be providing assistance and facilitation at community levels.

There are NGOs inside Burma, they only work for government. The role of the NGO is to provide help to the civilian people. But in reality, just only work for the government, not the people. (26-29, F)

We need to analyse the NGOs inside Burma, they cannot do everything, they do not have the rights to work freely. But they can reach lower level, upper level, like a bridge. They can spread the information to the international level. But they never talk about the grassroots, it is not appear in the media. Why they not listen to other side? (30-34, F)

As for the hope of a peaceful future Burma (in whatever form), there were still serious concerns that the entrenched ethnic-minority/Burman divisions would prevent it from ever being possible, with the prospect of ongoing conflict deemed likely.

If we don't have equal rights and justice like a Burman, we will have civil war again and again. It cannot end without equal rights and justice. (35-40, M)

The ethnic areas, I think, will have civil war again. The ethnic people demand their rights, and justice, equality, but the government do not give that; it will happen civil war again. (26-29, M)

People feel, we are human, we are not different, why do we not have the same rights as Burmans? Still fighting is not a solution. (22-25, F)

We are hoping for the best, but are ready for the worst. We need to wait and see. (26-29, M)

Subsequently, merely dividing the fields on the basis of *Burma* and *Grassroots* did not sufficiently cover the entrenched ethnic-minority considerations and differing opinions on what was actually being aspired to once the military government had been removed. As such, more representative terms were hypothesised as a *United Burma Movement* SAF, alongside another, the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement*.

Defining and Analysing Underlying SAFs

Although the initial divide could have been perceived as community and national responses to similar problems, the strength of mistrust shown towards Burman organisations and a Burman-led central government (by most, although not all, respondents) made it clear there was a more fundamental separation of future purpose than could be meaningfully addressed within a single ongoing field. To attempt to understand the sources of the division(s), the various identified approaches and/or incompatibilities could be arranged into one of two columns to represent the extremes of the spectrum (Table 5.2); however, these should only be assumed as representing the subjective (and potentially misconstrued) opinions/perspectives of the interviewees, not as statements of irrefutable truths or as conclusions drawn from existing scholarly analysis. Accordingly, each person or organisation could then be seen to assume their own particular majority position in relation to each individual issue or concern, on the understanding that a certain amount of fluidity would be required in differing circumstances.

Table 5.2

Indicative Contrasting Criteria Across the United Burma/Grassroots Nationalities Spectrum

TWO INVOLVED, BUT CONTRASTING, STRATEGIC ACTION FIELDS	
UNITED BURMA MOVEMENT	GRASSROOTS NATIONALITIES MOVEMENT
Rangoon-Centric	Ethnicity/Community-Centric
United Burma	Ethnic-Minority Autonomy/Representation
Promotes Commonality <i>(of language, religion, national dress etc.)</i>	Promotes Ethnic (Minority and Majority) Diversity
Government/Policy/Media Image-Down	Individuals/Communities-Up
Central Government, NLD, Aung San Suu Kyi	Community Government, Ethnic-Minority Parties
Predominant Burman Involvement	Predominant Ethnic-Minority Involvement
Ethnic-Minority Issues Low Priority/Disputed	Ethnic-Minority Issues High Priority
Ethnic-Minorities Framed as Victims or Rebels	Burmans Framed as Oppressors
Impacts of Dams, Pipelines, Ethnic-Minority State Land Confiscation; Low Priority	Impacts of Dams, Pipelines, Ethnic-Minority State Land Confiscation; High Priority
Human Rights Addressed Through Policy	Human Rights Addressed Locally
UN/ASEAN/INGO/ICC Priority	Community-Based Organisation Priority
International Media Acknowledged	International Media Overlooked/Negative
National Press Coverage Positive	National Press Coverage Limited/Negative
Funding Access Increased since Election	Funding Access Decreased since Election
Positive Internal Change post-Election	No/Negative Internal Change post-Election

As hypothesised, the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* referred to people and organisations perceived by the respondents to be working on issues for the current and future good of their immediate communities and ethnicities (micro-led); this could potentially include both ethnic-minority and Burman groups alike (Burman

also being one of the ethnic nationalities) if the Burman groups were willing to work together with other ethnicities as equals. In contrast, the *United Burma Movement* was considered to refer to national concerns of government, policy and centrality (macro-led) which were almost exclusively Burman-led, of primary benefit to the Burman people, and skewed towards a perception of solidarity which (in practical terms if not by deliberate design) marginalised the ethnic-nationality minorities. It would, however, be a misreading to assume that all of the respondents felt they belonged to the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement*; there were those whose preferred option was to be a part of a united Burma, albeit on the understanding that they would only likely be permitted to hold limited influence/power within a Burman-dominated structure.

Following Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) definitions, this would make the two movements either interdependent or dependent SAFs, according to related perspectives. Since both desired the military government to be removed, and allegiance gave the most powerful impression, they could be construed as interdependent SAFs (alongside exiled and international Burma-related SAFs) within the overriding field of the '*Burma Movement*'. However, due to feelings that associated partnerships between Burman and ethnic-minority groups involved inherent imbalances of power, at the government level the *United Burma Movement* would consider itself as being of more significance; community-level democracy being a trickle-down effect from national reform, rather than one achieved collaboratively or being led from communities up. The *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* would, consequently, perceive the same dependent relationship from

the opposite view. The *United Burma Movement* was thus consistent with the '*Burma Movement*' perception of being a challenger to the incumbent state field, as it essentially aspired to replace it and ultimately settle as a new, improved, democratic state field. In contrast, the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* was essentially nonstate in focus, involving a range of alternative minority positions/nested SAFs of varied aspirations (a number of which would overlap beyond the boundaries of the '*Burma Movement*' umbrella field) requiring even more evident dedication to the nurturing/encouraging of diverse social skills. While such distinctions were understood within the day-to-day operations and the individual mindsets of the participants, they were not completely evident to outsiders, with the '*Burma Movement*' (as the most internationally recognised name) being understood/assumed to represent all levels in relation to both current and future aspirations. This difference was (as previously identified by Brees, 2009) partly due to the respective priorities of the ethnic-minority and Burman groups, as well as the corresponding visibility of their concerns and issues.

The *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* was less perceptible to outsiders, but not only as a result of the relatively small sizes of the different ethnic-minority populations. Their enhanced security worries and local areas of focus often led to them being more concerned with implementing community activities, rather than publicizing what they were doing at national or international levels. If a group's priorities proved an exception, then one possible explanation that repeatedly emerged in the interviews, and will be further explored below, was that this may have been due to the financial support stipulations of donors. These could be

contingent upon their achieving wider awareness, rather than their own belief that such measures were worthwhile; this then necessitated time, effort and considerable social skill being put into generating the required resources. Additionally, this would also provide an explanation as to why reports produced by ethnic-minority groups often contained unrealistic rhetoric, referring to national Burma goals that were out of the reach, or even remit, of their particular ethnicity and/or gender-specific grassroots organisations. Rather than reflecting their true future aspirations they were instead expressing the opinions (they thought) the donors wished to hear, applying the social skills required to maintain resource allocations and secure their position within the operational framework of the border-based *'Burma Movement'*.

Consistent with NGO-related issues in other countries (as outlined in Chapter Two), this situation, at least partially, appears to have occurred because grassroots ethnic-minority organisations were trapped in a dilemma. They could state idealistic unified Burma-related goals and objectives to fulfil the criteria required by the (assumed or actual) perspectives and capital of many of the donors, although they knew them to be largely beyond their real scope. Alternatively, they could stay true to their community roots and run the risk of not receiving financial support. This could then promote splintering, undermining credibility and effectiveness by raising concerns over the true motivations of border-based groups and individuals -

Some of the issues groups, they come to Thailand, they start an organisation, they write reports. But they not really know, not talk to people, not represent what is really happening. International groups too, they say they work for

issues, but they not know. They do what the donor want, it's not real. (26-29, M)

Many of the organisations, people at grassroots level did not hear, they came here and then started an organisation. We need to think about what is their activity, what they say. Are they really for the people, or do they do what the donors want so they can stay here, feel important? (30-34, M)

While there was evidence that the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' could have been considered to consist of actors operating within two different SAFs of conflicting future intentions, and that this went largely unacknowledged at the national and international levels, the interview subjects also expressed concerns related to power, leadership and the ambitions of individuals consistent with Fligstein and McAdam's notion of social skill. Groups that concentrated solely on issues, particularly the presenting of them to international communities, could actually be seen to be irrelevant or even damaging to the cause(s) by failing to engage in direct, regular contact with relevant internal communities. Such groups could, according to the interview subjects, then be considered to have been established more for the benefit and ego of their leaders, and/or as guises for accessing international funds. Subsequently, exhibiting the social skills needed to appear legitimate and successful to outsiders could actually be considered, at the grassroots level, to be exploiting those affected by the issues rather than legitimately representing them.

People who have been on the border for long time can say they represent their ethnic people, but they not there anymore, their information is not true for now, but they still talk. (26-29, M)

Some never go back to home communities, not listen to others who have been, but still say they speak for them. (30-34, M)

If they went back and worked with the community they could affect more, some just like it here. (26-29, F)

As such, identifying divided SAFs did not alone provide a sufficient answer as to why grassroots border-based groups may have appeared inconsistent or ineffective. There were also additional issues, involving not only engrained behaviours and expectations related to ethnicity, gender and leadership (which we will investigate more fully in Chapter Six), but the implications of actors within the fields also valuing divergent social skills and resources.

Resource Perspectives, Variations in Focus and International Ineffectiveness

As was becoming evident, external parties held a considerable level of financial influence across the wider *'Burma Movement'* context, but it was not yet clear the extent to which they also had the potential to impact upon behaviours, values and personal aspirations. Research conducted by the Local Resource Centre (LRC) inside the country had already acknowledged the importance of social skills, recognising that relationships with donors and INGOS were mostly considered *'a matter of personality as opposed to policy. Largely, personalities and interpersonal communication style were seen as the determinants of successful funding partnerships.'* (LRC, 2012: 14), highlighting the importance of personal connection over systems, effectiveness or field affiliation. Additionally, the discrepancies between local and international salaries and motivations had already been noted, as well as the potential for INGOS to be self-centred and opportunistic. As concisely

summarized by the LRC research, community-based workers were typically viewed as *'committed and involved with the work based on charitable values and kind hearts'*, while INGO staff were seen as *'interested in financial gain and undemanding work conditions'* (LRC, 2012: 14).

As the main purpose of talking directly to those involved on the border was to glean alternative perspectives than those offered through external, library-based or donor-driven analysis, it was necessary to establish whether or not a division in various forms of resources (as defined by Fligstein and McAdam (2012); i.e. similar to, but offering more analytical scope than, Bourdieu's notion of capital) existed in the opinions of the interview subjects on the involvement of international people, including aid and government agencies, inside the country. Accordingly, dissatisfaction was expressed at various interventions and policies, both in central and ethnic-minority areas. Donations, expectations and media reporting could be well-meaning, but, due to a lack of comprehension of the real situation(s) and the associated SAFs, resources and social skills of those involved on the ground, were often fundamentally misjudged.

A donor, they sent to rural area, the toilet units. But the people say *'We cannot do like that, we do not have materials for pipes, roofs. We cannot build toilet building blocks'*, so they were not used. (30-34, F)

Especially in Nargis region, they lost everything, they need food. INGOs provide them with blankets, mosquito nets, but in reality they do not really need that. (30-34, M)

Recently, some NGOs in Rangoon, they got international money to go to the ethnic areas and give the farmers seeds. But they not ask the farmers what they need, they decide themselves. So the seeds they choose are not good for the local land and the farmers cannot use, so they throw them away. (22-25, M)

There were also issues of disconnection between foreign and local values, and/or incomers not showing respect to the communities and culture, seemingly implying their views and methods to be inherently superior to traditional customs.

For people living in Burma, when they see one of the foreigners come and taking notes, making a record, they will feel it's weird. Normally people in rural areas they are only concerned about food, shelter, basic necessary things. When you ask them to document their activities, they say *'Why? It's a waste of paper'*. (26-29, M)

Some of western people in my state, they look down on my people. If someone starts to talk to them, they think this man wants to get something from them, they not trust. (22-25, M)

On the border, similar issues were reported during international interactions, both in relation to the power wielded by donors and their lack of consultation.

The donor, they decide what is important, then the organisations have to do what they say or they don't get money. Why is like this? They do not listen to the people, what they think matters. We achieve less as we have to do what they think. (26-29, F)

Inside Burma, we have no money, but we can do many things. When we come here, we expect we can do more than inside. But it depend on donor, what they want. (30-34, M)

Sometimes we are not value for those things the donor wants. For example, a tree, you give to me as present. I may value it, may keep it, but who cares? But you ask me, *'What would you like? Let's plant together'*, we plant, we fertilize, I value that; because I involved in this, I gave my strength. (30-34, F)

There were also issues with the effectiveness of international working styles and performance indicators, the lack of awareness that valued resources might be different, as well as the level of commitment of those directly involved.

If the donor make some workshop they only think about 50 participants, 100 participants; they say *'We are very successful'*, not what the people learn. They never ask. They spend lots of money, for wasteful way. (30-34, F)

I went to a leadership training, they said I should change everything. My talking style, my body movement, I do not understand any of it. They say *'You should smile when you talk'*, but why should I? It's like a trick, not honest. Every day I have to make a presentation, not changing, just the same, I cannot do what she say. I did not learn, but they gave me a certificate. (22-25, M)

The donor, they really judge the organisations on how well they speak and write English, not how much they achieve in their communities. If you write, talk well, you can get money, but you might not do good work. But very good work and bad English? It very difficult, the donor not support. (26-29, M)

Most of the western people, they come to work as volunteer, short time, just only to get experience, feel important. We work for Burma, this is our own country; they not understand, not useful, they take our time and not help. (26-29, F)

These views support similar ones observed by other commentators; for example, South (2012) summarised ongoing tensions in international agencies-grassroots collaborations inside the country.

Often however, bureaucratic requirements force local actors to try to conform to procedures that are not practicable or realistic, given the situation on the ground. For local actors, there is a danger of being forced to choose between being locked out of access to funding, and/or having to change their priorities and ways of working, in order to fit into donors' pre-conceived, generic notions of what constitutes 'professional aid work'. (South, 2012: 1-2)

While there was an evident perceived separation between what the respondents considered to be important and the parameters that they felt forced to work within by international donors, for there to be analytical value it was necessary to attempt to clarify the specifics of the differing perspectives.

As we have already established, disconnections in communication, values, working styles and priorities (both at international and regional levels) carried implications for the transparency and effectiveness of border-based initiatives. The resources-related hypothesis was therefore that grassroots people and organisations, through their search for financial support and improved circumstances, were inadvertently being encouraged to deviate from what they initially valued to instead conform to the stipulations and beliefs of outsiders. While awareness and acceptance of alternative perspectives can affirm and enhance existing viewpoints, and be maximized and manipulated through the effective application of social skills, the question was whether acknowledging, and potentially adopting, the different priorities and values of external parties served to hinder their effectiveness in relation to the issues. The artificial insertion of external perspectives could actually have distanced individuals from their traditional cultures, ultimately limiting their longer-term potential to be effective members/leaders in their communities. Based

on analysis of the expressed opinions and given examples of the interview subjects, an indicative overview of the anticipated ends of each spectrum of divergent resources is given in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3
*Indicative Contrasting Criteria Across the
 International and Community/Tradition Influence Spectrum*

TWO CONFLICTING RESOURCES ORIENTATIONS	
INTERNATIONALLY - INFLUENCED	COMMUNITY / TRADITIONALLY - INFLUENCED
International Standards Valued	Traditional Customs Valued
Formal Qualifications Important	Practical Experience Important
International Capital Prized	Local/Community Capital Prized
International Languages Important	Ethnic-Minority/Regional Languages Important
Work Styles Systematic, Deadlines Rigid	Work Styles Irregular, Deadlines Flexible
International Awareness Priority	Community Awareness Priority
International Criteria/Proposal-led	Need/Community-led
Distanced/Independent from Communities	Extension of Communities
Challenging to Revert/Reintegrate Inside	Easier to Re-Integrate as Never Detached
Perspectives/Approaches Broadly Structural	Perspectives/Approaches Broadly Social Constructivist

The hypothesis was that the *United Burma* and *Grassroots Nationalities* SAFs (and their related values, conventions, skills etc.), functioned, simultaneously, alongside the above orientations. Due to strategic fields being acknowledged as conceptually latticed and interlinked, and actors being able to apply social skills to participate in/utilise resources across multiple arenas simultaneously (Fligstein and McAdam,

2012), it subsequently became possible to tentatively conceptualise and illustrate the potential (conscious or unconscious) underlying reasoning and motivations for conducting various different types of activities (Fig. 5.1).

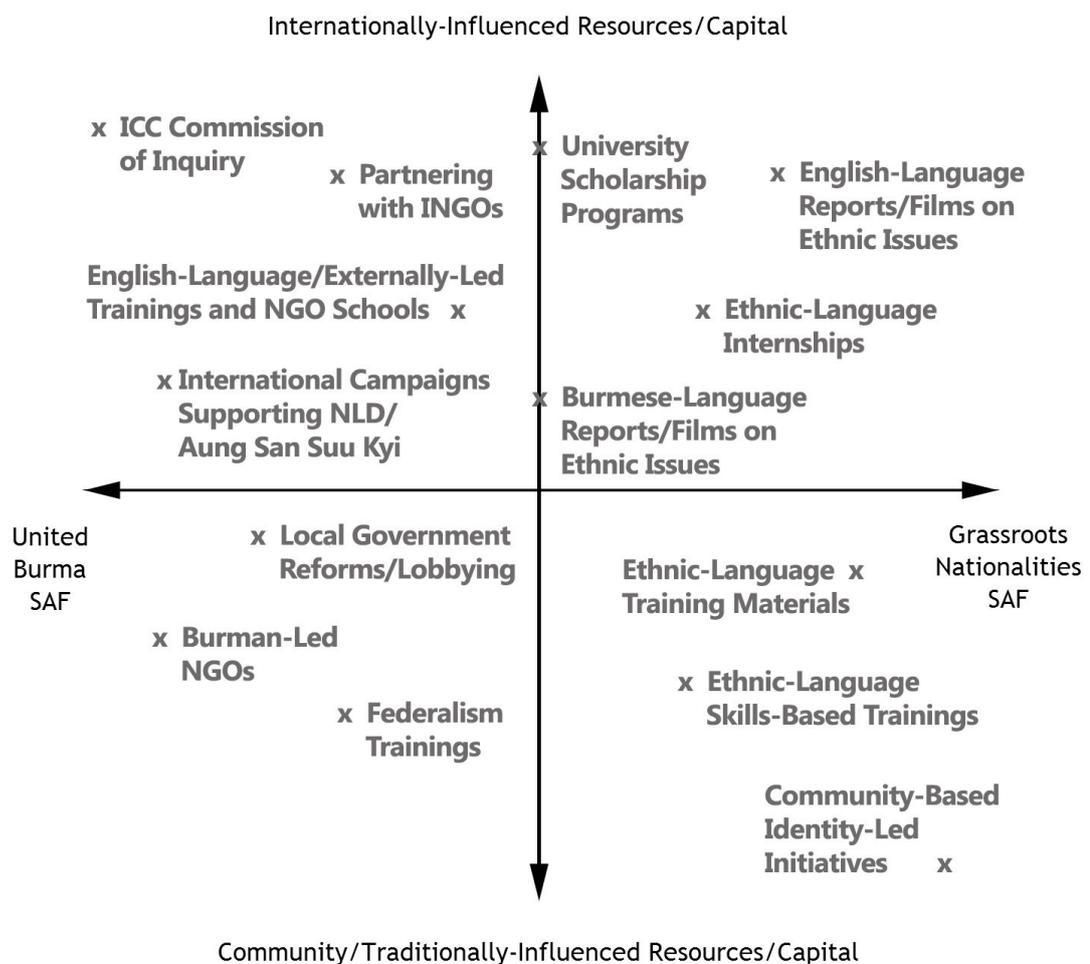


Fig. 5.1
Conceptualisation of SAFs (x-axis) and Resources Orientations (y-axis) with plotted theorised positions of indicative activities

Many of the grassroots groups wanted to engage in activities in the *Community/Traditional-Grassroots Nationalities* quadrant. However, while trainings were implemented in ethnic-minority languages on the border, due to issues of monitoring and lack of visibility it could be difficult to secure funding for

community-based cross-border work. The *Community/Traditional-United Burma* quadrant was less conducive to border-based work, although there were, for example, trainings on understanding the mechanisms and implications of a united federalism. Subsequently, due to geography, practicality and donor expectations (of situation, as well as standards of reporting and accountancy), the majority of border-based work fell into the two internationally-influenced quadrants. These could range from (English-language) ethnically-produced reports and films on ethnic-minority issues, to INGO partnerships, NGO-run schools, or attempts to lobby international agencies and governments.

Consistent with the above hypothesis, the interview data reflected evident discrepancies in the resources that were valued by international and ethnic-minority people when engaging in Burma issues, both inside the country and on the border. There were numerous ways in which these incompatibilities seemed to then be addressed. The first was to firmly plant their ideologies within the *Community/Traditional-Grassroots Nationalities* quadrant by attempting to continue without any donor support or international influence. Although this could leave them with extremely limited funding (*economic* resources), it would safeguard their cultural traditions (*cultural* resources) and keep everything in the control, and the responsibility, of the ethnic-minority people themselves (*social* resources) (Bourdieu, 1986; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012).

I want to start with my project, I can do it with little funds. It may not be big, but the people need to understand that they want to stand up by ourself. Some are all always '*Someone must come and give for us*', why do they not

accept? So we are not asking other people. We don't need many things from other people. (30-34, F)

I not happy working with the donor. Sometimes the things that are very important to us, they are not interested. It can be difficult, but if we work hard we do better on our own. (22-25, M)

Most of the young would like to dress Western style, but what is great? We have our own culture and we need to protect from this bad thing and explain to the youth. They not need that, the international culture is not better than their own. (26-29, M)

While not outwardly in need of the same level of basic assistance as those within the camps, border-based groups could also become dependent on the provision of funding from international donors to fulfil their physiological and safety needs (*economic* resources); not only for training and research activities, but offices, salaries and maintenance expenses. Subsequently, another potential approach was to apply the necessary social skills to attempt (either superficially or wholeheartedly) to embrace, and then project back, the resources that were valued by the donors and international media, then adapt their proposals and activities accordingly. To an extent this represented sound business strategy, as the more their trainings, campaigns, personal behaviours and use of language aligned and resonated with the criteria valued (*social* and *cultural* resources) by donors, the greater their chances were of successfully securing financial and physical support (*economic* resources).

For our organisation, we have lack of international skill for submitting proposal, launching report, so we not have experience for that. We need to work on that, learn what they want, then we can get money and do something. (30-34, M)

We need to analyse how the donors spend money, what they support. We have to make it look like we do what they want, although we not really believe. (26-29, M)

For donor perspective, they may decide if our activity is effective or not. If they think it's good, they support, office, stipends, visas, we can stay here. As long as they think we do good job, they will support to us. (26-29, F)

For some, working with international parties was seen as an opportunity to hone their social skills, broaden their outlook, learn about alternative cultures and embrace new concepts, rather than being perceived as charity or as threatening to, or critical of, their traditions or current outlook.

We should understanding each other. I am not familiar with your culture, but if I go to work with you I should need to know *'What is your value? What is your culture? What is your living style?'*. Then you also need to learn from me too. If we need to work together we should learn from each other. (30-34, F)

We should not be like *'I don't need to care anything for other culture'*. We need to copy, we need to imitate. But we still know what our own ethnicity mean. (26-29, M)

We need to know about the other cultures, knowing about their cultures is not like losing our own. Not the same. (22-25, M)

However, there was also an extent to which understanding and applying international perspectives and approaches could not only be considered as a broadening of the mind and/or a means to an end. They could actually be viewed as being genuinely superior and preferable to retaining those of their own culture,

representing a shift in their (embodied *cultural*) resources persuasion towards the internationally-influenced.

I think international people, if they take responsibility for something, they try to finish it. Most of our people are not like this, it takes very long. (Internationals) are more serious about their responsibilities. (30-34, M)

Most of the white people, they work in time, exactly. As for my people, even though they would like to join, we will come one or two hours after. It can be difficult to say the time, the other way I think is better. (30-34, M)

International education is great, we can learn from them many skills, learn why they are more successful than us. It is a good thing. (22-25, M)

I like to work with international people, I can learn skills from them that I do not have, different ideas, opinions, view. Their ways are better than ours. (26-29, F)

Internationally-influenced resources could then not only be seen as practical and attractive in themselves, but also in terms of what they could metaphorically represent and the resulting esteem that would result from conforming to them. One particular example was the importance of higher education; holding (or aspiring to) advanced degrees was considered the norm amongst the internationals involved on the border, yet was often considered as unimportant or even negative by those grassroots people who were firmly rooted within the community/traditional orientation. As a theme this not only relates to Bourdieu's extensive writings on the significance of education and class, but reintroduces the concept of existential/symbolic resources.

First illustrated through his ethnographic research of the Kabyle people of southern Algeria in the 1960s, Bourdieu proposed the additional capital concept of symbolic capital, the non-economic (or good-will) exchange of items or acts of value; *'a form of power that is not perceived as power, but as legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others'* (Swartz, 1997: 90). Symbolic capital is ostensibly a form of *'legitimate accumulation, through which the dominant groups secure a capital of credit, which seems to owe nothing to the logic of exploitation'* (Bourdieu, 1977: 197). The dominated therefore bestow an advance of recognition and esteem to the dominant, under the collective belief that this accumulated *symbolic* capital carries legitimate value, which may later be exchanged for universally beneficial *cultural* or *economic* capital (Swartz, 1997). Subsequently, *'agents possess power in proportion to their symbolic capital, i.e. in proportion to the recognition they receive from the group'* (Bourdieu, 1994: 164). Similarly, Fligstein and McAdam refer to the need for individuals to confirm their significance beyond the material, both personally and socially, in what they call the existential function, *'the distinctive human capacity for meaning making and the construction of collective identities'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 43), intertwined within the wider *'shared sense of order and existential integrity on which social life ultimately rests'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 22). They acknowledge the need for social skill in the acquisition and recognition of these existential/symbolic resources, which are essential to the creation of a *'positive sense of self that resonates with others'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 47). They subsequently consider *'the formidable resource advantages - material, existential/symbolic, and political'*

(Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 85) to be the key challenges to altering the balance of incumbent and/or dominant power within a SAF.

As one illustration of these existential/symbolic influences in practice, Bourdieu commented on the inclination of privileged families to make economic investments in prestigious forms of education for their children, giving them the symbolic appearance of professional and intellectual credibility, thus seeming to legitimize the transference of their wealth to future generations (Swartz, 1997). However, for many on the border, formal higher education was seen as an aside rather than a carrier of kudos that demanded respect; practical skill, experience and willingness to work were indicated as being much more highly valued. This represented one of the most fundamental divisions between individuals and organisations operating primarily from a community/traditionally-influenced orientation, rather than the internationally-influenced position favoured/assumed by donors and INGOs.

I never think like this. I don't care anything about their background, qualifies, experience. I am working with some with degrees, some with experience, some without. They need to be willing to work, to listen. (26-29, M)

Experience is sometimes more important than education, an experienced person has practical skills, education is mostly the theory and it's different when we implement our projects. (30-34. M)

People working long time for the organisation are not graduated because of our circumstances, some people can look down on them. But when we implement the project the one who has good experience can do a lot. (26-29, F)

I have worked with many organisations, many leaders, some have good qualifications. Some are not degree holder, but they have good experience. Some have both, but they have short temper, very aggressive. Everybody has their own talents, good points, we cannot separate. (30-34, M)

Bourdieu went on to argue that the illusion of misrecognition of value is essential with symbolic capital, as the significance is lost if it appears to have been acquired for reasons of self-interest (Bourdieu, 1977). Accordingly, and contrary to the values and expectations of international agencies, those with higher education could even be regarded as less desirable within organisations, with their academic efforts being deemed selfish and arrogant rather than of benefit to their communities.

Sometimes, some of the people who are educated, they look down and argue with the leader. They don't care about the experience of the leader, they are very proud that they are educated, they do not listen. (30-34, M)

Some people, they went to the university, when they come back they expect to be leader. Why should they be? They did not stay, help the community, they went away, helped just themselves. They will have learned, but what they learned is not of great value to the people, they do not have good experience or skills. If they had stayed with the people, or learned skills that were useful, they would be more respected as leaders. (30-34, F)

It is better if less educated people join an organisation. It doesn't matter if they are educated or not, but people can think it gives them power. It doesn't matter, experience matters more. (26-29, M)

A key factor in the initial identification and classification of the two alternative resources orientations was the evidence of a lack of recognition by some individuals about how what was existentially/symbolically valued could be different at local and

international levels. This was fanned by various INGOs supporting/encouraging/coaching grassroots people to apply for international university scholarships, seemingly on the assumption that they needed to aspire to achieve the supposedly universal standard of formal education as promoted, and valued, by international people. By not adequately assessing if such qualifications were actually regarded as useful in the applied context, grassroots people (ethnic-minority and Burman alike) who were convinced/assisted into pursuing advanced education, in the belief it would accelerate their leadership prospects, were then in danger of conducting (or aspiring to engage in) effectively fruitless labour. If these alternative resources perspectives were not realised, it could be assumed that it was the amount and quality of their existential/symbolic resources that was insufficient when their superiority and suitability was not subsequently recognised, not that the resources themselves were viewed as insignificant within the grassroots or community fields.

I got a scholarship and earned my bachelor degree, but when I went back to my community they did not accept me as a leader as they did not know the university I attended. That is why I must now go to the famous university, like Harvard, then they will respect me. (26-29, F)

I thought that if I got a degree I would have power, but the leaders were not interested. They said I should work for the community, that was more important. Maybe if I earned a master's degree they might value it more. (22-25, M)

Promoting the value of formal advanced academics to grassroots people (as opposed to practical, applicable skills) might therefore have been counterproductive; removing the best and brightest from their native cultures,

preventing them from being actively involved in community-based action for several years, in pursuit of qualifications that were then not necessarily seen as either relevant or imbued with existential/symbolic value by those within the communities themselves. This could then leave those who had chosen that path in an uneasy state of limbo, with the expectation that they deserved to be respected and accepted as leaders when they returned, only to discover they were, potentially, further removed from that becoming a reality than if they had never left. Additionally, by the end of their educational experience, they may relate more to internationally-influenced resources and have a habitus substantially different from others within their communities. Consistent with Elyachar's (2005) assessment of the dispossession felt by locals whose values had been shifted by their engagement with INGOs in Cairo (as explored in Chapter Two), this could lead to feelings of detached from their own people, leaving them feeling uncomfortable and/or unfulfilled by the prospect of working 'only' at the community level.

While all grassroots organisations worked towards some combination of addressing various social concerns, training needs, environmental causes and human rights injustices, there were two general categories under which the primary focus of their work would fall, dubbed '*identity-based*' and '*issues-based*'. Each category included individual groups and networks, involving both single and multiple ethnicities. For identity-based groups in particular, however, there were geographical limits to how much ethnic diversity could be embraced within their membership while still being able to realistically implement activities in their home communities; although collaborative/parallel projects could be agreed on the border then conducted

independently in different states/areas. There were also a number of identity-based umbrella organisations and networks that involved multiple ethnicities, conducting trainings around inter-ethnic solidarity, working on collaborative projects to highlight the continuity/similarity of causes, but these were nearly always in addition to (rather than a replacement for) maintaining their own particular community connections. Issue-based groups could operate from a more inclusive base, and were more likely to include Burmans, but needed to strike a balance, opening up discussions to encourage multi-ethnic dialogue without then losing focus on the specific issue(s) being addressed.

The identity-based groups, such as ethnic-minority youth and women's groups, were largely considered to be more micro-driven, with stronger-valued traditional/community-influenced resources. This typically resulted in stable internal connections and the more direct provision of amenities (e.g. women's shelters, nursery schools) alongside practical trainings and empowerment initiatives.

They want to show their identity, like youth, women, like Pa-Oh, something like this. I think they want to raise awareness about their issues. They have suffered, they are united by their suffering as a community. (22-25, F)

This is because of the current situation they have to face, they really want their own communities to improve. They really want to show, this is our identity, this is our nationality, this is our culture. (18-21, M)

They are trying to organise human rights violations and land confiscation in ethnic areas, to not happen again. They are more effective because they work

in their community, have the voices of the community throughout the project. (30-34, M)

Most identity-based need to base on the domestic, inside. Have close links inside, listen to the community, but issue-based can be based wherever. (26-29, M)

Issues-based, although they could also have a particular ethnic-minority connection, were more singularly focused on one particular cause or area of engagement. While work/research could also be conducted inside the country, being based on the border was then a strategic choice related both to the security concerns of attempting to address controversial and/or anti-military issues internally, as well as the more conducive funding, communication and networking situation in Thailand for raising awareness at international levels.

Some of organisations, they really like to work inside Burma for the issues, but they can't do, but they have a chance to do that in Thailand. (22-25, M)

Issue-based may be identity too, like a dam in an ethnic area, but it's more focused; just on that, not other things. Identity cover many things, many people. (26-29, M)

Mostly I think, the issue-based are working for human rights or something, it's good for campaigns and awareness-raising. (18-21, F)

Issue-based organisations have better networks and communications with other issue groups in other countries, other organisations. (30-34, M)

There seemed to be agreement that, due to their more focused organisational approaches and greater recognition of the importance of international awareness, reports released by issues-based groups would (typically) be of better quality.

If writing a report, the issue-based group will be more effective, more focused.
(22-25, M)

Most of the people tell me that some of the identity (based groups) reports based on issues are not so good, but I never criticise. (26-29, F)

If a group only concentrates on one issue, their report should be better than other group involved in many things. But not always, some identity reports are very good, some issues reports very bad, it depends on the research and the writing. Sometimes groups want to say they did a report, they not really focus on if it accurate or new. (30-34, F)

However, this typical divergence in quality was not necessarily down to lack of research skill or writing, but the relative perception of how important spending time on working on reports for external audiences was seen to be, compared to engaging in community-based activities. While primarily rooted in the community/traditional orientation, identity-based groups could also engage in internationally-valued activities, awareness-raising and the releasing of reports. The primary motivation for international visibility could therefore be understood to not always be because the groups themselves felt it was a priority, but that the stipulations (and, less transparently, resources) of donors insisted/implied that it should be.

Some identity groups, they release reports, but they not good, they do them because the donor asks. It waste time and money, community work should be more important. (26-29, F)

Issue groups achieve more, write better reports, but the identity groups listen to the communities. They are more important. (30-34, M)

I don't want to say whether reports by identity or issue-based is better, everyone we try to do our best. But some issues groups, they listen more to the donor, what they say does not really represent the people. Their reports may seem better, but they not always true according to the situation. (26-29, M)

Subsequently, reports of variable quality could be churned out purely to 'check the boxes' with donors, fulfilling their interpretations of the situation and implying their perspectives (and resources) were shared. If funding was to be secured for additional activities that the groups considered to be more relevant, then producing reports could effectively be the imposed price. This could draw time and effort away from other, more direct engagement that the groups actually felt was more relevant; essentially removing skilled people from necessary and practical work that may not have been dependent on funding support. While some organisations could see the reports as a required means to an end, others maximized the impact of their internationally-influenced social skills by switching the focus of their organisations towards writing reports in preference to community-based work; the involvement of donors actually then served to decrease active engagement, rather than support or improve it.

One particular illustration of the divergent SAFs, resources and desired social skills that polarized organisational priorities and assumptions was through opinions on the International Criminal Court (ICC). In the run-up to the election, some quarters called for a Commission of Inquiry and implored those in other countries to endorse

it, putting faith in international mechanisms and top-down action as the best way to remove the military and address issues inside the country. Other groups, who instead preferred to address issues in practical, immediate ways through personal empowerment and community engagement, saw the ICC as a waste of time and effort, a long-term disempowering long-shot primarily motivated by the egos and personal aspirations of those leading the campaign.

Some of the people, they talk, talk, talk about ICC. But why? It would take years, we need to take power away from the generals now. Change at community level is possible now, why wait for international lawyers to fix our problems? It so stupid. (30-34, F)

The groups who want a Commission of Inquiry, they just want it so they can say they campaigned, feel important, be famous, get money to go to international conference. It not do anything, the process too slow, we need change now, not in ten, twenty years. Working with community is much better, achieve more. (26-29, M)

As a Commission of Inquiry had not, as of August 2014, materialised, this particular instance of faith in international intervention as the most effective primary response would indeed appear to have been misguided.

Assessing Resultant Insights and Implications

As the interview data has illustrated, if the hypothesised divisions of SAFs, resources and varied social skills had been acknowledged at the grassroots and international levels, it would have been possible for organisations to assess their goals, map their activities, and determine/illustrate to which conceptual quadrant they felt they

primarily belonged. While such awareness would not have removed the option to stray beyond their usual boundaries if considered necessary in certain circumstances, it would have enabled a clearer perception of, and improved the potential to maintain, their core foundation. As it stood, due to the lack of understanding that all groups that were a part of the wider *'Burma Movement'* did not belong to a single SAF that considered the same united aims and expectations to be at stake, organisations could feel compelled to voice opinions or implement activities that were not truly representative of their actual priorities or beliefs. They would thus attempt to cover issues and implement activities well beyond the sensible bounds of their remit, resulting in scattergun approaches of limited effectiveness. Due to a combination of shifting donor stipulations, inexperienced leadership, personal interests, self-serving application of social skills, and overreaching, it was possible for organisations (despite their limited staffing and resources) to attempt to simultaneously implement activities across multiple quadrants. Not only could this result in nothing then being executed particularly well, but also a degree of mission drift; the leaders, and then also their members and supporters, might then become confused as to what the organisation's purpose really was, undermining their credibility. There was also the concern that, due to having to fulfil certain assumed central goals which may not have been relevant to the actual issue(s) being tackled, reports and statements could then conclude with little more than the restating of universal goals and vague rhetoric, substantially curtailing their impact.

While the interview data did appear to support the hypotheses that there were distinct, but largely unacknowledged, divergent SAFs and perception of resources within the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*'; and that the social skills of participants played a large part in their ability to appear relevant/worthy of financial support, it was not yet clear whether these were more fundamental divides than the visible, self-imposed segregations around ethnicity, gender and issues of leadership. If the observable divides were not compatible, then the true number of SAFs and resources perspectives would be substantially more.

OBSERVABLE DIVISIONS: ETHNICITY, GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

Introduction to Investigating Evident Divisions

On the border there seemed, to the initial observer, to be an unnecessarily large number of Burma-related groups. While their central focus could be a particular issue, the other most visible self-segregations were ethnicity and gender, or a combination of the above. Another noticeable mode of division was splintering, seemingly as a reaction to leadership disagreements. It was thus necessary to determine whether these initial observations were accurate, and, more importantly, if these lines of self-division then opposed or supported the proposed theories of contradictory underlying SAFs, distinct perceptions of resources, and that social skills could have been being utilised for primarily personal advantage rather than the furthering of the cause(s).

This chapter first explores the influence of ethnicity on an organisation's structure, particularly how this is then tied to the previously noted variables of being identity or issue based. This leads into establishing Arakan and Pa-Oh traditional opinions around ethnicity, how these are demonstrated through the cultural norms of

marriage and collaboration, and the implications for national government. The importance of gender, and the gendering of the habitus, is investigated with reference to Bourdieu's *'La Domination Masculine'* (1990b); particularly, in relation to community, family and organisational expectations/presumptions about the roles and leadership capabilities of women, and more traditionally feminine capital and resources. However, on the border, international attempts at redressing the traditional gender-balance of opportunities are revealed as having resulted in positive discrimination, allowing women greater access to funding and training opportunities. Essential traits of leadership are examined in relation to Bourdieu's leadership habitus and Fligstein and McAdam's utilisation of symbolic resources and social skills, including both ethnic-minority perceptions and cultural expectations, especially the concept of *ah nah*. The interview evidence then reveals an awareness of the need to address poor leadership within communities, distinct from international intervention or centralised government power.

Organisational Numbers and the Nuances of Nationality

Although impossible to state exactly, there were certainly over one hundred grassroots organisations operating on the Thai-Burma border; as many were very small and/or did not have a strong public profile, the true figure could easily have been double or more. While some were umbrella organisations or part of collaborative alliances, the amount of fragmentation appeared to be grossly disproportionate given that, as previously identified, many of the stated key organisational goals were essentially the same. Several focused their attention not only on one cause, gender or ethnic-minority group, but on specific subcategories

incorporating several factors e.g. Karen Human Rights Group, Palaung Women's Organization, Arakan Oil Watch. The initial question as to how there came to be so many groups based on the border, especially those with ethnic-minority orientations, seemed to have a relatively simple answer; one that has already been largely resolved in the previous distinction between identity and issue-based organisations.

Identity-based groups were not, as they initially appeared to outsiders, necessarily seen by their own members as 'organisations' in a formal, structured, or internationally-expected sense; individuals subsequently would not necessarily have carefully considered the operational goals or objectives before deciding, or applying, to join. Instead, identity-based groups were often felt to be more like extensions of their home communities, distinct more in geography than ethos, values or stated organisational priorities.

When people first come to the border, they meet with the people they know. Maybe they have cousin, friend, they go to the same group as them as they will take care of them. They maybe not think what the group work is. (22-25, F)

Ethnic groups are like community. They will help to protect people who come to them. Especially with women, their family feel they will be protected if they join the women's group. If they not feel they will be safe, the family may not allow them to go. (26-29, F)

Sometimes people were already members of the organisation inside the country, like the youth or women's group, then they know more about what the group do. But often, they not really know, they just want to be around people from their culture, speak their language. (22-25, M)

While not true of all groups, ethnic-minority identity organisations were more likely to be primarily concerned with social responsibility and support, with the implementation of formalised trainings, writing reports etc. considered much more secondary concerns. Divisions could therefore mostly be attributed to the geographical diversity of the distinct home communities they represented; for example, the presence on the border of both the Arakan Youth Network Group (AYNG) and All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC) was not down to an organisational split, but due to both having strong memberships inside the country, just in southern and northern areas (respectively) of Arakan State. While a certain amount of splintering did occur later, due to internal disagreements and/or specialisation (e.g. Arakan Rivers Network and Arakan Human Rights & Development Organisation both branched off from AASYC), it was not a major consideration within the '*Burma Movement*' as a whole. In contrast, and as revealed through the interview data as well as organisational publicity materials, groups who endeavoured to be more exclusively issue-based were often founded on the border rather than tied directly to inside communities. Additionally, in accordance with organisational-entrepreneurial models of NSM theories, they also tended to be smaller and more selective/structured in their membership/staffing, as well as less likely to have offices in which people also lived. Subsequently, they were not generally seen as obligated to provide a duty of care, even if an ethnicity was included in their name. While consistent, this answer was too simplistic to account for all of the various organisational divisions, overlapping initiatives and differing opinions that caused fragmentation and the appearance of ineffectiveness on the border. However, it aligned with the previously identified identity/issue focuses, as well divisions

between differing resource priorities and divergent *Grassroots Nationalities* and *United Burma* SAFs.

Before proceeding, I should explain my use of terminology and spelling in relation to the interviewed ethnic-minority groups; they will be referred to throughout as Pa-Oh and Arakan. While both 'PaO' and 'Pa-O' were also freely used with no controversy, the spelling preferred by the majority of respondents was 'Pa-Oh'. The use of 'Rakhine', however (although supposedly the official name for both the state and the ethnicity) was not embraced by the subjects. Instead, it was mainly viewed in negative terms, as a name that had been imposed upon them as an attempt to marginalize and undermine their strong ethnic heritage. 'Rakhine' only seemed to be conceded when seen as a necessity; for example, on official documents inside the country, as the government would not allow the registration of any organisation or political party that used 'Arakan'.

In all organisation working for our people in the country, they had to change to 'Rakhine' to register, they do not believe. ALD (Arakan League for Democracy) never changed their name. (26-29, M)

'Arakan' mean the one who always give their identity, the respect to their race, their nationality. 'Rakhine' is created by the new government, but we always call Arakan State. We are Arakanese, we have our own meaning, we are not to forget we have our own kingdom, we need to fight for that. The government know that, so to banish our spirit, they changed the name to take our power.

'Rakhine' is not mean anything. (30-34, F)

Ethnic identity is, of course, an intrinsic part of an individual's upbringing and life perspective, which helps to initially form, then continually inform, their habitus. It would therefore be absurd and insulting to assume that one external researcher could, through the accounts provided by a small interview sample, provide any significant insight, analysis or understanding of hundreds of years of history and the cultural heritage of two distinct ethnicities. Considerable information was collected from the subjects, including fascinating descriptions of traditions, folklore, festivals, superstitions, foods and origin myths; while extremely interesting and illuminating, such details ultimately did not prove relevant when approaching the particular questions and argument posed by this thesis. Instead, what was required was evidence of, or contradictions to, the hypotheses of divided SAFs, divergent perspectives on resources, and the importance of the application of social skills.

When asking the subjects to describe important elements of their heritage and cultural traditions, one initial clear illustration was in the norms of marital unions within communities. While intra-ethnic-minority marriages were the most common, neither the Arakan nor Pa-Oh considered marrying outside of their own ethnicity to necessarily be an issue, so long as they were also from an ethnic-minority and, ideally, of the same religious background.

Most of Arakanese, they get married within their ethnicity. It is important to maintain our culture. (18-21, M)

When Pa-Oh marry, the first thing the community will look at is the religion. If you married a Christian, people will be *'Why did he marry that lady?'* because we

do not have the same beliefs. If they have family problems, people will just say 'See?' because of her religion. (26-29, M)

Marrying Arakan would be best, Karen second. We can accept the Karen people to marry, it is no problem, Buddhist is better but Christian okay. Third option would be Mon, many Arakan people marry Mon. (30-34, M)

Although each identified a particular group that might not be as readily accepted within their communities (Shan by the Pa-Oh, due to their feudal history; Rohingya Muslims for Arakan), both considered the marrying of Burmans to be potentially problematic.

If (Pa-Oh) marry a Burmese woman, then the community will not like it. People living in mountain areas, when they were young, their parents were oppressed by Burmese soldiers, if their parents went missing the Burmese took them away. They will say 'Why are you marrying Burmese? They are bad people'. (26-29, M)

As an Arakan, I would not marry a Burman. (22-25, M)

With Pa-Oh people, they are very simple minded, they do not take any action at all. In other states, if you marry away from certain family groups they will cut all the inheritance. With Pa-Oh, if you marry Burmese, we not like it. But when it comes to taking action, we just let it go. (26-29, M)

Accordingly, ethnicity also played a role in the perception of potential collaboration, both inside the country and on the border. Both Arakan and Pa-Oh interviewees indicated that other ethnic-minority groups were considered friends and prospective partners, with any particular issues typically attributed to differences in

religion, personality or perspective. Burmans, however, were clearly indicated as enemies.

All of ethnicities are friends, except Burmans because they destroyed our freedom and our kingdom. Most of the old people, if you speak Burmese in Arakan State, they ask *'Why are you speaking the stepfather language?'*. They hate it. (30-34, F)

We have no special friends, but all are friends except Burmans. Neighbouring countries are more friends than Burmans. (22-25, M)

It is easier for us to work with other ethnic people than Burman. For Pa-Oh people it is easy as there is no internal ethnic conflict or issue for us. (30-34, M)

In contradiction to the professed acceptance and openness shared with other ethnic-minority people, even if Burmans did attempt to become involved in ethnic-minority issues they were not always considered to be trustworthy or genuine. There were, however, some signs that this was starting to improve.

Burmese people are very cunning, they can trick you. We (Pa-Oh) think we are very simple, but Burmese people can be clever in a cunning way; don't make a deal with them without knowing them well, they can trick you at any time. (26-29, M)

If (a Burman) sees a snake and an Arakan, they say *'You have to kill first the Arakanese, as Arakanese has more poison than the snake'*. Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi's father, also talked about this. Many Burmese people talk like this. Everyone in Burma knows this. How can we trust people who think of us this way? (26-29, M)

Burmese, most of the military, when they came, they have a very violent manner, kick you, trick you, bad thing on you. They generalize that Burmese people do not have good behaviour, they are cunning. (22-25, M)

Pa-Oh people do not trust Burmese, even a teacher, they ask *'Why has she come to teach here?'*, they think she is a spy. But it is changing bit by bit, people are more accepting. Even with Burmese it is getting more flexible. (26-29, M)

While there was evident resistance against being assimilated into Burman culture, there was also acknowledgment that traditional resources, values and perspectives may not be infallible. Certain opinions would need to evolve if they were not to be used to perpetuate prejudices to future generations.

They may be a monk, our religious view is that we must pay respect to them, but they may not be good. Our culture says we must, but we need to think more, not just do what tradition say. (22-25, M)

In our Arakan State, we need to promote gay and lesbian rights, we as society are not accepting of that. (30-34, F)

Both ethnicities were clearly proud of their ethnic heritage, keen to maintain their identity, and were fighting to improve the inequality of their people's rights. However, consistent with the idea of divided *United Burma* and *Grassroots Nationalities* SAFs, there was not one agreed path to achieving this, nor a consensus over whether unity (ethnic-minority and/or national), or full independence, was the ultimate goal.

The Arakan Liberation Army refused to sign a ceasefire, many Arakan people agree with this. They will not stop fighting until they are an independent kingdom again, they do not want to be like Burman. (26-29, M)

It doesn't have to be like Pa-Oh State or independent kingdom, it is not really what we need. There must be a frame that guarantees our rights. If we do not lay down that frame then there will be inequality for sure. (26-29, M)

(Pa-Oh) culture doesn't have to be independent, but if there is serious oppression we have to be acknowledged, our rights. It will just evolve. For now, we want the unity. But later, maybe more. (30-34, F)

The Arakan and Pa-Oh people both conveyed a strong sense of pride and loyalty in relation to their own heritage, with various self-produced publications (and my own extended observations and work experiences) revealing similar feelings by other ethnic-minority groups. Such evident cultural allegiance illustrated a clear unease and/or incompatibility in relation to individual and collective participation within a nationwide, democratic, *United Burma Movement*. Interview subjects repeatedly stated, or implied, that within their ethnic-minority groups there was an entrenched distrust in not only the Burmese army and the military-supported government, but also the general Burman population. Instead of ethnic-minority concerns being seen as significant areas of legitimate grievance that required careful handling and trust-building, the interview subjects indicated that they felt that Burmans (if they even acknowledged the tensions at all) viewed such differences as inconvenient anomalies that posed a threat to national solidarity. As such, the objective of a unified country, as aspired to by Burman-led organisations and political parties, was not necessarily assumed by the grassroots people to signify a united federalism

composed of equal representation. Instead, it could be viewed as a means by which to enforce Burman culture, language and traditions throughout the country, thus removing the uniqueness of the ethnic-minority areas and denying the independence of the individuals and communities within them.

As previously explored, despite their different affiliations and issue positions, all of those involved in Thai-based organisations could be viewed, at least theoretically, as united in striving towards certain universal goals of genuine democratic reform, and the end to human rights and environmental abuses. Yet the internationally-perpetuated dream of a unified country ruled by Aung San Suu Kyi (a Burman) and a Burman-centric party (NLD) was incongruous with the repeated descriptions by ethnic-minority people of Burmans as their enemies. This appeared to represent a fundamental flaw in the perception of the *'Burma Movement'* as a strong united whole, both on the border and elsewhere, strengthening the hypothesis that there were (at least) two conceptual movements involved. While the particular Arakan and Pa-Oh examples were not identical, so would naturally not impact in the exact same ways on the individual habituses and social skills of individuals from each particular background, these differences did not appear to be so distinct as to make each ethnicity warrant their own distinct movement field(s) or resource orientations (at least not when being examined in the Thai border context). Instead, ethnicity was shown to serve more as a contributory factor within, and consistent with, the suggested SAFs and divergent resources hypotheses. The next stage was then to see if the same could be shown in relation to gender.

Gendered Traditions and Bourdieu's '*La Domination Masculine*'

In the border context it was not immediately apparent whether women's issues and women's organisations constituted separate SAFs with their own distinct rules and resources, or if the importance of gender was more of an included, if encompassing, signifier of status, identity, and reaction against historical patriarchal oppression.

While Fligstein and McAdam do not address gender issues explicitly, in his 1990 article '*La Domination Masculine*', Bourdieu aimed to illustrate how the habitus of the individual becomes embodied with gender hierarchies, theorizing that '*...gender differences are continuously confirmed, reinforced and legitimated by the very practices that they determine and legitimate*' (Bourdieu 1990b: 8). Bourdieu asserted that gendered divisions of labour, and/or displays of physical strength, represent one of the few signifiers of identity that remains under the control of those who are, in all or most other respects, dominated. Bourdieu drew parallels between tribal and Western traditions by suggesting that they both imbue the masculine with the seemingly positive qualities of virtue, bravery and the destiny of a warrior hero, with women being associated with uncelebrated menial tasks, the practical and the family (Bourdieu, 1990b). However, by engaging in a deconstruction of the works of Virginia Woolf, Bourdieu also illustrated how prescribed male roles of power, honour and victory can be both blessing and curse, leading to behaviours such as tyranny and self-doubt in increasingly desperate attempts to avoid failure. In contrast, the seemingly lesser roles of women actually afford a greater freedom of experimentation, with most failings not being considered important enough to result in significant humiliation (Fowler, 1999). As Burma was ruled by a military

force that would not allow women to enlist, there was a very clear gender correlation to social roles and the potential to attain status and power.

Historically, women in Burma did apparently enjoy a comparatively high level of literacy and freedom, to the extent that early 19th century English observers considered their status to be better than that of women in Europe (Steinberg, 2010). Both Burman and ethnic-minority cultures were traditionally patriarchal, as epitomized by the proverb *'Respect son as Master and husband as God'* (WLB, 2008: 19). Men dominated in leadership positions, as they were both given more opportunities to assume such roles and were better accepted within them (WLB, 2006b), with even women who were exceptional in their field rarely given recognition by society (WLB, 2006a). Rather than being encouraged to become leaders themselves, women were expected *'to be mothers of hero soldiers who defend and safeguard their mother country'* (Ma Tin Win, 2005:12). Although the military government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997, the 2008 United Nations CEDAW Committee review highlighted -

...the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions as well as patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in all spheres of life... the State party has not taken sustained and systematic action to modify or eliminate stereotypes and negative cultural values and practices. (CEDAW, 2008: 6)

Human rights abuses against women were reported as widespread, both in frequency and location. These included being forced into manual labour and portering for the military, even when old, frail, pregnant or breastfeeding (KWO, 2008); forced relocation/displacement, either through trafficking or the destruction or confiscation of land to make way for military development projects (Miley, 2008); and systematic acts of gender-based violence (torture, sexual slavery, rape, forced marriage) committed by soldiers as a way to both subjugate and terrorize minorities (NWI/WLB, 2010: 7). All were perpetuated by a military culture of impunity and the under-reporting by victims due to their mistrust in the authorities (SIGI, 2009).

Agenda and lack of objectivity was a clear problem within the literature produced by pro-government and opposition groups alike, inviting scepticism and undermining their legitimacy. For example, the government-supported Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF) offered conformist briefing papers such as '*Adorable Customs and Traditions of Myanmar Women*' (Khin Aye, 2005), while renouncing unfavourable reports as '*made up with the false information as well as exaggerations*' (MWAF, 2006: 1). Similarly, ethnic-minority women's organisations favoured provocative titles such as the Karenni-produced '*Tales of Terror and Grief*' (KNWO, 2010) and Shan-led '*License to Rape*' (SHRF and SWAN, 2002), which made unequivocal statements such as '*the Burmese military regime is allowing its troops systematically and on a widespread scale to commit rape with impunity in order to terrorize and subjugate the ethnic peoples*' (SHRF and SWAN, 2002: 8). While documented examples and independent statistics conveyed greater credibility than grandiose rhetoric, the moderate reader was still left to attempt to filter the facts

from the propaganda. Prejudice and discrimination against women in Burma was suggested as being analogous to that against the ethnic-minority groups, with both being composed of a range of deep-seated, invisible and often disputed cultural attitudes that prevented their members from being fully engaged at all levels of society (WLB, 2006b).

Bourdieu (1990b) argued that male domination becomes incorporated into the habitus of individuals as a result of it being inscribed in society. According to Bourdieu, viewing masculine domination *'outside of its historical legacy and context is to objectify it (as a liberal entity) in ways which no longer make it possible to understand it as an embedded representational knowledge form'* (Dillabough, 2004: 497). In contrast to contemporaries such as Derrida and Foucault, Bourdieu recognised the intertwining of society, history, nature and self; all are ascribed meaning, then shaped, reconfigured and reproduced, by the tensions that exist between structure and culture (Dillabough, 2004). There was evidence that masculine domination could still, by some, be considered an absolute, although this was not the majority view amongst the interviewed sample.

It's very important, especially for Burma, male is better. (22-25, M)

I will never accept women and men as the same, according to nature they are different, they will never compare. (26-29, M)

Men and women are different; the man is able to work harder than the woman, not only physically but mentally. (30-34, M)

In Burma, gender expectations were indicated as evident in social behaviours after early childhood.

When we were young, we didn't think girl or boy was different. We think is the same. Around 3, 4 we could play together, but when we grew up we don't play together, automatically. We naturally separated. After that (the girls') behaviour started to change, more like a woman. (26-29, M)

While pre-teen boys preferred, and were encouraged in, more boisterous games, girls received approval for sitting, talking or playing alone. Girls could face discrimination, either parentally or as inferior participants, if they expressed an interest in joining the boys.

Parents would sometimes say it is not good for the girls to play this game. For boys, I think everything is okay. (26-29, M)

If a girl wanted to play football, it will not happen like this, there will be punishment by the parents. (30-34, M)

Mostly, when we played, the girls were not leaders. (18-21, M)

By puberty, however, inter-gender play was expressly forbidden by the community.

When we hit puberty, we were not allowed to play with the boy. We should then be quiet and stay at home. (30-34, F)

(Teenage girls) they are afraid to talk with boy, maybe the community they think the girl is, how can I say... bad character. (26-29, M)

Boys would also be forced into masculine roles, leading to a lack of tolerance in relation to sexual preference and more feminine behaviours.

Some boys were allowed to grow their hair, they looked like gypsies with the long hair and earrings. The old people did not like, they told them they look strange, not like men. (26-29, M)

One of my cousins is gay, his behaviour is very soft, he is cooking, I understand. But two of the brothers, they shout at him. *'If you wear clothes those type, never appear in my sight; I will kill you'*. They feel ashamed, he dress feminine, flamboyant. They say *'You are boy, you must be manly'*. His parents try to change his appearance. (30-34, F)

Bourdieu attempted to reveal the structures of domination that are exposed in social practice and how these then become normalized in the habitus, with the aim of highlighting how understanding inequality and privilege is not only the route to overturning domination, but an ethical obligation by those involved (Dillabough, 2004). Bourdieu's analysis of the creation and recreation of gendered cultures is ultimately centred on the *'subtle understanding of the symbolic relationship between the circulation of gender myths and the processes of social differentiation'* (Dillabough, 2004: 500).

We have proverb, the female chicken, when they crow, it is not morning. As for the male chicken, when he makes a sound, it makes it morning. (26-29, M)

In a family, they always favour the boys over the girls. Because of this habit, it is a cultural route, the father has the power. (26-29, F)

Even if the woman tries hard, achieve some issue, some work, without participation of men people do not accept. Only women cannot be accepted unless the men participate. (30-34, M)

Bourdieu also suggested that the physical differences between men and women are involved in masculine domination, with the male body assumed to be superior to the female, thereby legitimizing a *'relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction'* (Bourdieu, 1990b: 23). While there was some evidence of this, there appeared to be more of a realization that while women were indeed different to men, they were not necessarily less important or useful.

Men can work more physically, but the woman can feel and see the details.
Both men and women have weakness. (22-25, M)

In our culture, women work harder than men. Men cannot do everything, but women can. When men plough the field, sometimes the women do, but the men cannot do in the home. Working, production-wise, there is no serious discrimination between men and women. (30-34, M)

Traditional gender roles were well defined, particularly within the family, with the husband assumed to be the head of the household. While these were acknowledged as changing, there was however recognition that historically different responsibilities were complementary, with a balance needing to be struck for the family unit to function successfully.

In my grandparent era, men should take responsibility for providing food for the family, the wife should take care of the children. But now, I don't think it like that. (22-25, M)

In a family, the mother is trying to find time for everybody, the father is trying to improve everything in the family. Totally, 99%, the man's weakness is that they cannot manage the money, the details, like the woman. (26-29, M)

If a girl or a boy, their physical is very wild, very rude behaviour, this is because of the father. Their talking, understanding is rude, this is because of the mother. If they can control and teach, they could guide their children for this not to happen. We can guess what sort of family they came from. (26-29, M)

While male domination was described as clearly entrenched in ethnic-minority Burma society, illustrating what McNay described as *'often unconscious investments in conventional images of masculinity and femininity which cannot easily be reshaped'* (McNay, 1999: 103), there was evidence that younger generations were beginning to reject this in favour of a more equal society.

The new generation and old generation behaviours are changing, we see that. (18-21, M)

It's personality, not gender, women can be soldier, men can be soldier. (22-25, F)

It depends on their nature, it's not gender relevant. (26-29, M)

We women always say thanks to men. My mother never blames to my father if he makes mistake, but he blames her. But my brother then say *'Why you blame her?'*. He sees her more as equal. (30-34, F)

Gender Implications for Leadership, Status and Complementary Skills

Upon being asked the direct question of whether they would prefer to be led by a man or woman, it was generally stated as irrelevant.

I think, for me, everybody can lead. I think not gender relevant. If you have good leadership and good skills, you can be a leader. (26-29, M)

As for the leader it doesn't matter men or women, it is the same qualities. (30-14, M)

I worked with women and men leaders, it's how he or she sacrifices for the people, I think that is more important. (26-29, F)

In further investigation, however, culturally-entrenched gender differences and assumed masculine domination did emerge as potential barriers to women's leadership.

All of people are based on human nature, we can't define man is good, woman is bad, man is strong, woman is weak. Men and women can get skills, it is no problem, but man is better. If the woman has more skill we can accept the woman, if their skill is the same I would like to accept the man. That is my personal feeling. (26-29, M)

Inside the country, most of the people do not want to accept someone who is getting really old, like Aung San Suu Kyi. She is a woman, most of people do not like woman leadership, woman leader. (22-25, M)

In reality, most of the girls and women are less self-confident to be a leader. But in my own family, my mother is a leader. (30-34, M)

There was an acknowledgement that, despite traditional cultural expectations, women could possess social skills and personal attributes that made them suited to leadership. Also, there was evidence that women could consciously choose not to compete with men by pursuing leadership roles, instead deciding to exert their power through alternative routes.

The men, they want to be in charge, it is very important to them. Women do not care so much, they do not need to have the status, they have different power. (26-29, F)

Women feel that we are hero. For example, if I want to be a leader in the organisation, I keep quiet, I let them be a leader. I give to other people, sacrificing, stepping back, I think I am hero. (30-34, F)

Men want to be leaders, but they need some of the same qualities as women. (22-25, M)

A notable exception to women holding leadership roles was in women's organisations, although they too could fall into the same poor leadership traps as men.

Even though we are women we sometimes misunderstand each other, we are aggressive and jealous of each other. It can be complicated with women. (22-25, F)

In our society we have women's groups, they have many problems with their leadership, not sharing, leaders not listening. The younger women are often not happy, but they are feeling as they cannot leave. (26-29, F)

I always find the lady who work with women's organisations, they are so sensitive, so aggressive. They are always asking for women's rights, saying to me *'You are woman, you should be interested to work for this'*. But I not interested only in men or women, I interested in people. It is bias, I can't respect. (30-34, F)

There were also related issues where women, especially within women's organisations, caused conflict by adopting (or unsuccessfully blending) a more masculine habitus under the assumption that this was an essential strategy for

leadership and survival. Additionally, and consistent with the accounts of how people came to join identity-based organisations, they could also find themselves self-ghettoized within women's organisations. Although their interests and skills may have been more suited to working on other issues, there was pressure to conform to the expectations of their (predominantly female) contemporaries.

Women's organisations, they have lots of conflict between women. They never try to finish the problem, they keep hiding everything in their heart, it's not good for communication. (26-29, F)

Sometimes, even though some of the women work in the women's organisation, they even not really want to work in that organisation. But because they are women, they say the only place for them is to stay. They consider that *'Even though it's not good for me, I should stay here a time.'* (30-34, F)

According to McNay, issues are addressed through the ongoing *'negotiation of discrepancies by individuals in their movement within and across fields of social action'* (McNay, 1999: 111). In relation to Bourdieu's ideas of social change, gender identity can be theorized as increasingly reflexive as a result of the breaking of *'the routine adjustment between subjective and objective structures'* (Adkins, 2003: 30), with this lack of fit between field and the gendered habitus improving the potential for gender-based social transformation and critical reflexivity (McNay, 1999). Although women in Burma were described as receiving improved access to education and being increasingly welcomed into the labour force, their previous responsibilities, including being physically and emotionally available to their families, were not necessarily any less entrenched. Due to *'often unconscious*

investments in conventional images of masculinity and femininity which cannot easily be reshaped' (McNay 1999: 103), and the male refusal/lack of realization that they can perform domestic tasks, women who desired to transition their workload from the home to the workplace instead ran the risk of having to adopt their new work in addition to the old (Adkins, 2003).

Women are more serious for their survival than men, women have to live, buy food, water. Every day, she has to do things. Even if she also has job, she must still do because the man will not, he will not think, not see. (30-34, F)

Even in organisations, if there are both men and women, the men do not always see that they can clean, do some tidy, replace things. Sometimes they say the women should do, other times they don't think that somebody will have to. So the women must do. (22-25, F)

An understanding of the female habitus has also been suggested, for example by Lovell (2000), as increasingly desirable cultural capital/resources within the person-oriented (rather than commodity-oriented) labour market, representing a shift from Bourdieu's *La Domination Masculine* (1990b) in favour of more traditionally feminine skills such as emotional control, sympathetic listening and the curbing of anger (Adkins, 2003). The benefits of these feminine attributes and social skills were very clearly identified as being advantageous in grassroots organisations.

If we have women in the organisation, when we talk with other men leaders, we have good talking. Even if we are talking men and men, it's arguing, complaints, fighting, problems. Different genders, it's talking, less arguing. (26-29, M)

Men are more likely to shout, fight, women are not like this. (30-34, M)

Men always think they have good quality to be a leader, but if an organisation there is no women, that organisation is not completely successful. Men are aggressive sometimes, eager to fight each other. Women are quite cool, can be like a bridge, negotiate. (26-29, M)

However, while such behaviours were recognised as valuable when shown by women, they were not necessarily embraced as being desirable for everyone within the organisation. More sensitive responses could also be seen as only appropriate/relevant for gender-related issues, rather than universally beneficial.

Women also are more sympathetic for some cases, especially children, women are more serious about that; childbirth, contraception, it's a woman's issue. With other issues, men are better. (22-25, M)

Consistent with McDowell (1997), traditionally feminine responses were often seen more as natural attributes than particular skills that merited recognition, therefore removing much of the potential for women to be considered as deserving rewards or promotions in preference to men. While Bourdieu recognised that gender norms were engrained, his consideration of the gendered habitus/field relationship did not completely recognise the complexity of subjectivity in relation to gendered positions (Thorpe, 2010). He subsequently did not fully realise the social change when individuals *'inhabit, experience, move across, change and are changed by new and emerging social fields, as well as by gender relations within existing fields'* (Kenway and McLeod, 2004: 535). Rather than constituting an independent field of masculinity, gender could instead be better conceptualised as a component within and between fields, whose value, importance and effects alter depending on the context (Adkins, 2004; McNay, 2000). Bourdieu ultimately suggested that by

acknowledging the respective advantages and limitations of biological difference and traditional gender roles, both men and women may, through a process of evolution rather than revolution, modify their cultural reproduction to escape their continual perpetuation (Bourdieu, 1990b; 1998). Through the acquisition of experience, as well as economic and social change, individuals can begin to consciously question their habitus and the agreed social order, subsequently recognising and making choices beyond what was previously taken for granted (Saugeres, 2009).

As many of the above quotes indicate, gender was intrinsically woven into the context, with men and women indicating in multiple ways that gender did indeed have an impact upon the habitus as perceived by the involved individuals. Yet, the interview data as a whole (as well as my empirical observances) did not clearly support the notion that men and women were dividing to form distinct new SAFs or resource orientations. However, due to the perspectives and policies of INGOs, aid agencies and donors etc, those within the same SAF, with similar resources and social skills, could still have different experiences, opportunities and access to funding that was directly related to their gender.

In practice, while gender-exclusionary women's organisations (for particular ethnicities or causes) were typical, there were no organisations exclusively dedicated to the rights of men; the assumption being that women took care of women's issues, with the other organisations (which women could still join) focusing on everything else. Women could find this segregation very limiting, but felt that cultural

expectations pressured them down this gendered route. However, external donors often stipulated that particular activities or grants should be for women only; positive discrimination, seemingly aimed at rectifying the assumed gender imbalance inside the country. Subsequently, women on the border could actually have disproportionate access to funding, trainings, scholarships and other opportunities (Parliament UK, 2011; APHEDA, 2012), when compared to their male counterparts; so long as they were willing to apply the necessary social skills to appear to conform to the resource perspectives of the donors. Essentially, groups who were only able to 'tick the box' for one area of concern (youth, environment, human rights etc.) would find themselves disadvantaged by not being able to appear to present the double impact of women's organisations who wanted to run activities covering the same issue(s). This would prove significant in the latter stages of the border movement, with women's organisations (at least those who possessed the social skills to relate, and appear appealing, to international donors) subsequently finding themselves in stronger funding positions than the majority of issue-based or ethnicity-centred groups. In this respect there was a division between the genders, but one that seemingly emerged as a result of conforming to international influence, expectations and resources, rather than being a separate SAF or insurmountable social construct intrinsically intertwined with power, expectation and opportunity.

Symbolic Power, Leadership Structures and Power Dynamics

When investigating entrenched expectations of leadership and power, the question of why there were so many organisations on the border had, again, already largely

been answered; the amount of identity-based groups was mainly related to the number of grassroots communities represented and their duty of care to their people, not due to widespread organisational splintering. That is not to say that fragmentation did not occur on the border, or that some organisations were not founded primarily to fulfil the career and/or ego aspirations of the leader(s). Those who worked within border-based groups were also not necessarily happy with the actions and decisions of their leaders, or indeed how they acquired their positions, but did not necessarily feel they were able to speak up against them.

In relation to leadership and authority, Bourdieu theorized that all societies have social restraints and orders which are indirectly produced through cultural mechanisms rather than explicit social control. Unlike cultural, social or economic power, symbolic power (much like symbolic capital) is subordinate, transformed, constructed, an *'invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it, or even that they themselves exercise it'* (Bourdieu, 1994: 164). Symbolic power therefore is *'...defined in and by a determinate relationship between those who exercise this power and those who undergo it – that is to say, in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced'* (Bourdieu, 1977: 117). As symbolic power *'resides not in the force of ideas but in their relation to social structure'* (Swartz, 1997: 88), as a theory it can be applied as a mechanism to understand any situated context where the unique interactions and practices of individuals become valued, imbued with legitimacy and power, then subsequently deployed to define and shape the situation and negated order. Social systems become symbolic systems, instruments

that *'ensure that one class dominates another by bringing their own distinctive power to bear on the relations of power which underlie them'* (Bourdieu, 1994: 167), with the ideological stances of the dominant reinforcing and perpetuating their dominance both within their own and upon other classes. By focusing attention on the hidden rules of society rather than descriptions of it, Bourdieu created a framework that could be applied to reveal misrecognitions and recreations of power that legitimate and maintain social hierarchies (Horvat, 2003). Fligstein and McAdam would also address the same issues through their theories of incumbents, challengers and internal governance units; the power of incumbents would lead to SAFs being adapted to better meet their interests (with or without their realisation), with rules and meanings routinely favouring them and protecting their power, *'to legitimate and support their privileged position within the strategic action field'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 13).

Accordingly, significant insight into the national culture and power structures of Burma (and therefore the habitus of those raised there) comes from the concept of *ah nah*, described as *'a desire not to impose on others... maintaining smooth relations by considering others' feelings and speaking and acting accordingly'* (Fink, 2009: 134-135). In practice, this results in juniors (defined by age, position, education, wealth etc.) feeling that they not only cannot openly oppose their perceived seniors, but that they should be seen to agree with them so as not to offend or cause them to lose face. This was exploited throughout the regime by the high-ranking military, who reacted with genuine shock and anger if anyone, civilian or lower-ranked soldier, dared to oppose them; they *'trivialized the country's citizens*

by treating them as if they have no ideas of their own. People are treated like children who must obey their elders' (Fink, 2009: 137). The *ah nah* concept could also cause significant issues for border groups when interacting with other nationalities, as those unused to the cultural nuances could be under the impression that courses of action (and the resource perspectives underlying them) had been mutually agreed, when actually the people from Burma just did not want to appear impolite by criticising the suggestions of others. Additionally, when funding to do so was easily obtainable, fragmenting off and founding a new organisation was one solution for resolving leadership disagreements; they would simply avoid the discussion, without needing to raise (or address) concerns, contradict *ah nah*, or risk either party losing face.

By going unchecked for so long, the power-related actions and attitudes of the military rulers began to partially permeate into the values of wider society, sometimes leading to the general public (unintentionally or deliberately) imitating their behaviours. While people complained bitterly about the corruption, ineptitude and greed of the military government (Skidmore, 2004), they could then also admit that, if they held a position of authority, they too would be self-serving; *'the government always tricks us... if I was them I would act like that because I wouldn't want to hand over my power. My family would be rich because of me.'* (CPCS, 2010: 304). Further perpetuation would occur through families, due to the use of survival strategies paired with the perceived futility of opposition, *'despite their own dislike of the military regime, most parents raise their children to conform with military domination, and even to become part of the system'* (Fink, 2009: 113). Under the

military junta, suspicion of others was rife, both making the expansion of political or social networks extremely difficult, and leaving non-activists in perpetual fear of being accused due to personal grudges (Fink, 2009). As summarized by Aung San Suu Kyi, *'the greatest obstacle in the way of peace and progress in Burma is a lack of trust: trust between the government and the people, between ethnic groups, between the military and civilian forces'*. (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1997: x).

Bourdieu spoke of how the habitus may change through *the 'awakening of consciousness and socioanalysis'* paired with a *'critical or reflexive position'* (Bourdieu, 1990b: 16), allowing (amongst other things) for those in positions of leadership to improve their *'feel for the game'* by reading, applying, challenging, reflecting, or rejecting the logics of practice. Fligstein and McAdam would also theorize about the need for effective leaders, over time, to not only exhibit the social skills and personal gravitas to convince others of their legitimacy, but to develop the ability to *'devise and refine an interactive strategy that exploited the salient environmental factors'* (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 128). When the interviewees were asked what makes a good leader, the significance of personal understanding and reflexivity was evident.

Good morals, ethics, taking responsibility for their own position, accountability. (22-25, M)

A leader, for me, I don't care if he is rich, or poor, or good qualifications. If someone can do something, if he understand everything for other people, if he is the one who is willing to share everything he is. (26-29, M)

They must try hard and have good relationships with others. Personality should be soft, good temper, understanding everything, listening. (26-29, M)

An awareness and understanding of contextual layers, particularly of grassroots society, was also seen as important for effective leadership.

They need to have enough experience. They need to know all of the levels, grassroots and higher, to know and feel about that. (26-29, F)

They need to know more about the grassroots level more than the upper levels. Most of the generals can live at a very high level, so they do not know about the grassroots people. Must be able to live a simple life. (26-29, M)

Must be intelligent, patient, welcoming to all levels – rich men, business men, but also grassroots level. If they don't care about the grassroots level, there is no way. (30-34, M)

Upon being asked the signs of poor leadership, the most critical issues expressed were lack of reflexivity, selfishness, hunger for power and refusing to listen.

Some people think that being in charge means telling people *'Do this'*, but not thinking if it's a good decision and not listening to other people. Many leaders in organisations on the border are like this. (30-34, M)

Most bad leaders would like to get a lot of money, position. They are always looking down on others, discriminating. Not taking any responsibility and not trying to save or accept them. (30-34, F)

A bad leader's priority is just for their own, not for others. (18-21, M)

As would be expected from people who had grown up under the rule of a military dictatorship, there was an acute awareness of the physical and mental dangers of institutional force, and how this differed from true leadership and power.

In Burma, people are forced to follow the military, this is not real leadership. (22-25, M)

We were growing up under a dictatorship and we have to sacrifice a lot, and also had many human rights violations; I saw a lot of things. So it made me think to maybe go to the bad choice, as they made it seem okay. (26-29, M)

People who use force, if they point with a gun, say '*You have to go there!*' this is not power. If they can move people by other way, that is power. (26-29, F)

While wary of the effects of abusing or misusing power, it was also acknowledged that control might sometimes need to be asserted for the good of the organisation or community. A strong leader would possess the personal skills and understanding required to take action, alongside the insight needed to not overstep acceptable boundaries.

You are a leader, you are good to us, but we drink, destroy equipment, you can speak to us strictly. All of members in an organisation need to work together and collaborate, have the balance, a bad leader does not take control. (30-34, M)

Really, I don't like, but sometimes we need. If we're a leader, sometimes we need to talk to people and use power '*You must do this, don't do like this*'. As a leader, sometimes you have to force. It's not serious, but make, like a parent. (26-29, M)

The views of the interview subjects made it clear that, despite the good stated intentions of both inside and border-based communities and organisations alike, those who aspired to, or had assumed, leadership roles - either by design or necessity - did not always have the experience, skills (practical and social) or moral character to be effective in the positions. To fulfil the expectations of productive leadership it was not sufficient to just be capable of implementing activities or raising funds; it was also necessary to understand the interconnectedness of action and example, then successfully balance exerting power without simultaneously stifling that of others and/or losing self control.

We have the 3 Hs – the head, the hand, the heart. A good leader should have a good head, good thinking, *'Is it good or bad?'* It's not enough to have head, also need a heart to think deeply for the other people. Also need to lead with hand. (26-29, M)

While serious problems could occur in working with Burmans or international people, there could also be issues of power, control and communication when leaders and other individuals interacted with those from different, or even the same, ethnic-minority groups. As previously intimated, working inter-ethnically was, ideologically, recognised as both culturally possible and potentially beneficial. In practice, however, there could be issues of organisational fragmentation, incompatibility of ideas, and concerns around the distribution of power.

They are different, but some goals and objectives are the same, so there are umbrellas to work together. We collaborate with other ethnic groups on the same issue, but they are separate. (30-34, F)

Value-wise, most of the ethnic people they have similar values, similar culture, there is no big difference from one ethnic to another. It is up to the personalities of the individuals. (22-25, M)

It can be confuse; there can be many border groups from the same ethnicity, but they not work together. (26-29, M)

Most of the ethnic people want to work with their own people. For me, it's okay, I will work with everyone. If an organisation has different ethnics, it can be quite complicated, they discriminate each other, they are not happy working together. (30-34, F)

Rather than being seen as a sign of loyalty, stringently holding inflexible perspectives on one particular issue, gender or ethnicity could be seen as limiting, discriminatory and unrealistic. However, unlike with Burmans, inter-ethnic-minority disagreements did not seem to be attributed to cultural or security issues, but more to the leadership styles, personalities and lack of objectivity of those involved.

As far as I know, ethnic women are very strong, very supersensitive. They are proud to be ethnic women, they never try to understand another culture. (26-29, F)

We are not understanding each other, we only think for ourselves. Even though we are asking for democracy and federal union, we need to share everything. We want to be a leader, but we are not willing to work together. (30-34, F)

We are also facing many similar situations, but when we try to work together, we start to fight. Always focusing on my issue as most important. Even though we agree we should work together, but we agree in the table, then meeting finished and nobody shares. If we are not willing to share, what do we have? (26-29, M)

As the majority of organisations were not registered or officially regulated, there was no agreed standard or admission procedure for becoming a leader other than being elected by their peers, being forced into the role by circumstance, or establishing their own organisation and hoping others acknowledged legitimacy (of both the organisation and their leadership). While this lack of formal structure meant there were no official barriers to achieving a position, it also meant that the paths to leadership were confused. This could result in a surplus of those who considered themselves to be both worthy and capable of assuming leadership roles, alongside a lack of appropriate training and clear indicators to help assess who was actually equal to the task.

Organisation leaders, some, they do not really lead. They always talking, talking about politics, complaining, but they are not really doing anything. They won't make decisions, they just complain and talk more, so nothing happens. (26-29, F)

I was working for awareness training, they always want me to give leadership training, just only leadership, so I explain that *'We need only one leader, we don't need to give those kinds of training, we also need to give good followership too'*. They all want to be a leader, they are fighting, there is no place. (30-34, F)

It could also be difficult to gauge the adequacy of strategic organisational leadership; one of the only ways this could be assessed was by judging how well they had conformed to the funding criteria and internationally-influenced resources as valued by the donors (as discussed in Chapter Five), which may have had little bearing on their actual effectiveness at the organisational level. Similarly, an

individual, or a handful of people, could establish an organisation allegedly based around an issue, but without any real knowledge or connections. As explored in relation to the potentially damaging implications of NGO interactions (Chapter Two), so long as they possessed the relevant knowledge and social skills to appear attractive to donors (through exhibiting internationally-influenced resources, reiterating *United Burma* goals), and possessed the professional skills and language to adequately present funding applications, they could potentially secure lucrative funding and access to opportunities in preference to those of considerably higher legitimacy. Due to the accepted cultural norm of *ah nah*, even poor, selfish or opportunistic leaders could still be lauded and, potentially, then become/remain oblivious to their own failings.

Those who lead organisations, they do not always listen, they make bad decisions, they ignore there are problems. But because they are leader, the people feel they cannot say anything, cannot do anything. It is big problem in our culture, people see what is wrong but they do not say. (26-29, F)

Historically, ethnic-minority people inside the country had been marginalised, manipulated and oppressed by both the literal and symbolic power of Burmans, colonial rulers and military juntas. It was therefore not surprising that attempts by government systems, or interventions to establish (or educate towards the development of) local leadership structures based on external perspectives, centralised bureaucracy, international resources or national values could be met with reticence, scepticism and/or anger. Yet even an individual born and bred within a grassroots community, who supported the *Grassroots Nationalities*

Movement and favoured a community/traditionally-influenced resource orientation, could still fail at leading there if they did not sufficiently understand or demonstrate the personal attributes, social skills and leadership habitus expected by those who would then be their followers.

Examples of prior experiences with leadership repeatedly conveyed stories of leaders who were not very respected or successful, with cycles of ineffectiveness, selfishness and abuse of power being perpetuated (due to irrelevant symbolic resources) and unaddressed (due to outmoded or prejudicial cultural norms). As reporting such operational and personal weaknesses to external parties would be considered shameful (a loss of face), there were serious risks that such behaviours would be continued by any organisations that prioritised appearing attractive to donors. While this could result in altering their resource orientations and genuinely embracing international leadership styles, there was also the risk that poor practice would improve on paper, but continue to be inadequate in reality. However, there were clear indications that those working within grassroots communities were aware of past failings and were eager to not allow previous mistakes to be repeated by newer generations. Subsequently, there was evidence that many involved individuals were adopting reflexive positions and taking positive steps towards strengthening their own internal systems and leadership structures, with the aim of improving the futures of their own communities. Significantly, this was occurring at an organic, self-motivated level, independent of external attempts at leadership training and intervention.

Summation of the Importance of Visible Divisions

Ultimately, the interview data managed to clarify that there were indeed organisational divisions related to ethnicity, gender and leadership. While groups could be arranged according to underlying community affiliations rather than problems with leadership or opposing views, there were also certain negative consequences and implications. Ethnic-minority traditions, customs and religion were used as excuses for maintaining bigoted or sexist views, or continuing unfair and/or undemocratic social practices and opinions. Gender divisions were enacted by both men and women, effectively self-ghettoizing and perpetuating cultural inequalities. Insufficient experience of leadership resulted in ineffectiveness due to individuals not realizing their limitations, and/or the adoption of dictatorial styles which, due to years of conditioning by an oppressive government, were sometimes assumed as the default approach. Individuals could apply their social skills to pander to the interests and stipulations of external parties, securing preferential positions, financing and opportunities for themselves, at the expense of the issues, their communities, and their own moral integrity. However, all of these were recognised as largely tied to human foibles and addressable cultural norms, rather than presenting insurmountable difficulties or separations. Ineffective leadership, sexism, selfishness and ethnic-minority territorialism were all universal obstacles rather than specific, insurmountable barriers. Critically, the findings indicated that such issues were all established as compatible with, and secondary to, the more fundamental fragmentations theorised through the hypotheses of divergent SAFs and resource orientations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Research Intentions and Theory Applications

As the literature, press coverage and interview data all illustrate, when the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' was thriving there unfortunately was not a significant appreciation that not only were all of the involved groups *not* broadly consistent in their operational practices, but that the ultimate goals of individuals and organisations were not, and did not need to be, essentially the same. There were universal problems within organisations and communities, encompassing a range of factors; not solely in relation to noticeable divisions around gender, ethnicity, or area(s) of focus, but issues removed from their particular personal and/or organisational positions. Economic, cultural and symbolic resources were also significant; not only in relation to aspects of power, gender, and the correlation between ethnicity and (the perception of) social class (Bourdieu, 1996), but the multidimensional implications of international involvement and influence upon culture, tradition and the utilisation of social skills (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). An analytical framework subsequently needed to be developed that could be applied to assist, and further, awareness related to the underlying divisions inherent in the context, as perceived by the participants themselves. While Bourdieu's tools of field,

habitus and capital provided a valuable initial foundation, they ultimately proved to be restrictive when applied to the context; his field theory focused more on field formation and their ensuing dynamics than co-existing/overlapping fields and their interactions, and his notion of capital stipulated field-specificity. Subsequently Fligstein and McAdam's theories around strategic action fields, resources and social skills were also integrated and included in an original framework, which additionally incorporated elements of NSM theories, while still acknowledging the fluidity of the context. While Fligstein and McAdam's *A Theory of Fields* offers 'a general theory of social change and stability' (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 8), they are also explicit that their perspective only offers a starting point for further theoretical exploration rather than a fully-formed approach, and that 'it will take years of careful empirical work to determine the veracity of many of the ideas put forth here and the alternative conceptions that appear in the work of other field theorists' (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 221). The application of their ideas, combined with Bourdieu's tools and NSM theories, is thus not only consistent with the ethos of their work, but makes an original contribution to an ongoing and innovative area of theoretical development. This new integrated framework also potentially offers scope to be further adapted, expanded and applied by practitioners operating in alternative countries and contexts.

Accordingly, through analysis of the interview data, the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' was conceptualised as consisting of two concurrent, overlapping, SAFs; both committed to democratic reform and military accountability, but with conflicting ultimate future goals related to either national unity or ethnic-minority

autonomy. Divergent opinions related to community/traditional resource perspectives versus internationally-influenced values were subsequently also revealed, alongside the importance of applying social skills to effectively manoeuvre situations to maximum personal, professional and organisational advantage. This practical application not only demonstrates the effectiveness of the theoretical framework, but also contributes to the existing body of Burma-related research by focusing on ethnic-minority participants that have previously been overlooked. By operating from a unique position of established trust, the collection of the research data provided an opportunity for the grassroots interview subjects to express more open beliefs and opinions, rather than those they felt were expected by donors and international press. An additional original contribution is made by concentrating the analysis on the perceptions of the subjects (with all of their potential misunderstandings, prejudices and subjectivity acknowledged) rather than relying upon previous sources that, while seemingly displaying academic credibility, would only have been of very limited relevance when investigating the experiences of those involved at the grassroots ethnic-minority level on the Thai-Burma border.

Final Analysis of the Identified SAFs, Resource Perspectives and Social Skills

Through the realisation that conceptually divergent SAFs and resource perspectives each attempted (seemingly through necessity) to embrace the stance of the other and imply common goals, more specific weaknesses emerged. In practice, as revealed through the field research, this resulted in a multitude of inconsistencies, failures and frustrations.

Organisations and individuals that conformed to the *United Burma Movement* SAF hypothesis may not have fully understood ethnic-minority concerns or issues, so attempts to strengthen and coherently present their central goals to outsiders could effectively (although perhaps inadvertently) have appeared to be pushing nationalistic agendas and, consequently, marginalising ethnic-minority heritage. Umbrella organisations that utilised social skills to express *United Burma* agendas to donors could leave their grassroots member groups feeling exploited and/or betrayed. Policies or work styles that appeared overtly Burman-centric were invariably met with reticence and procrastination by ethnic-minority groups, as they feared feeling exploited, being tricked into betraying their people, or losing their leadership status to national control.

For groups oriented towards the *Grassroots Nationalities* SAF, attempting to appear to be part of a united movement could lead them to lose touch with their communities, overreach their influence, and attempt to address issues beyond their scope, skills, or the interests of the people they claimed to represent. This could result in weak publications of insufficient depth or quality, ineffective trainings, and activities on topics uninteresting or incomprehensible to the individuals involved. Although Aung San Suu Kyi was considered to be the figurehead of the internationally-acknowledged '*Burma Movement*' throughout her detention, within what was identified as the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* there was scepticism that she primarily represented Burmans rather than all of the ethnic-minority nationalities (Galache, 2013), as well as cynicism about the centrality, effectiveness and unity of her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) (Economist, 2013).

However, due to *ah nah*, grassroots groups felt they could not express such views to international audiences; this, inadvertently, then contributed to the illusion that her release from house arrest signalled a major breakthrough and she would, in time, assume her rightful place as the leader and champion of all the people of Burma.

Although not internationally acknowledged, the activities of the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* were often more directly applicable and effective at the micro/community level. International press, issue-based reports, appearances at academic conferences and prestigious university degrees were of limited practical use to the ethnic-minority farmer or fisherman, and were thus typically not recognised or valued by them as significant. However, having people return from the border who could pass on information about political systems, human rights, gender equality, land confiscation laws, and the obligations/benefits of belonging to ASEAN; all of these were of value to the local people as they could help them to understand, then fight for, their rights. Such knowledge and insight could make them less vulnerable to being manipulated by the government, commercial business, or INGO attempts to bolster their own finances through claiming weak local capacity. Being able to pass on skills such as sustainable farming techniques, reproductive health awareness or computer use was tangible rather than theoretical, and had the potential to yield visible results. Above all else, those who had been able to talk and work with increased freedom on the border, access information from uncensored news and academic sources, interact with those of other ethnicities and nationalities, develop critical thinking/decision-making/multi-faceted social skills etc, could then exhibit greater confidence in both the issues and themselves. Due to

their increased exposure to, and awareness about, what was realistically possible they ultimately had more potential to actually implement meaningful activities, not just indulge in unrealistic speculation or unquestioning compliance. Living, working and debating with those of other ethnicities on the border gave them exposure, awareness and reflexivity that would not have been possible inside the country, removed the fear of the 'other', and instead replaced it with facts and rational perspectives.

Those who had embraced and accepted the benefits of internationally-influenced resource perspectives could work on the assumption that recommended training techniques (including interactive and discursive methods) would be universal, when actually they were often culturally mismatched and/or confusing to people whose experience of education was founded on rote learning and unquestioning obedience. When subsequently trying to implement activities or assume leadership according to international standards, they could find that nationalist and local leaders alike would not necessarily respond to the ethos of such decisions, instead potentially finding them irrelevant, disloyal or presumptuous. The importance of formal (particularly international university) qualifications could be over-emphasized, undermining more genuinely valued practical experience and skills, ultimately hindering the prospects of younger generations when local leaders subsequently framed their educational endeavours as pointless, arrogant or selfish. Those accustomed to living in Thailand could find the prospect of returning to their communities unsatisfying, end up distancing themselves from genuine grassroots

concerns, then be perceived as irrelevant to the causes and/or accused of applying their social skills to exploit the issues for their own self-serving ends.

For those whose perspectives were more in accordance with community-traditional resources, there was the danger that returning home would result in lapsing into reactionary cultural norms, including perpetuating gender divisions, ethnic prejudice, narcissistic/nepotistic leadership, and general resistance to change. However, embracing community traditions is not analogous with being ignorant or dismissive of alternative perspectives, and anyone so accepting of the internal status quo was unlikely to have undertaken the initial risk of travelling to the border to pursue opportunities in activism. Involvement on the border exposed people to trainings and uncensored information, but also encouraged working and communicating with those of different cultures and other ethnic (minority and majority) groups; upon returning to their communities they could then not only be committed to enabling change, but would, potentially, possess more informed views, finer-honed social skills, and increased empathy. Yet there was still no guarantee that those who had left communities would be immediately accepted back into leadership roles, as those who had earned and/or assumed them in their absence would, understandably, not immediately step aside until their worth and dedication could be proven.

An increased awareness of these speculated underlying but co-existing SAFs and resource perspectives, the importance of social skills, and greater acceptance of reflexivity on all sides may have provided more potential for groups to operate from

positions from which they could have understood the internationally-influenced resource perspectives of donors, while still feeling they could implement their activities according to their own ideas, priorities and processes; be they influenced by community/traditions, international perspectives, or new innovative approaches of their own design. In addressing such concerns, the interview subjects spoke of conscious moves towards modifying old traditions (while safeguarding their cultural heritage) in favour of alternative, inclusive perspectives that would value transparency, equality, talent, honesty and merit. While some changes may have been influenced or encouraged by exposure to international perspectives, there was also evidence that ethnic-minority communities were acknowledging their own needs and evolving independently, dissociated from significant levels of external instigation or the embracing of international viewpoints. This increase in participants' awareness and experience added up to a stronger foundation for the possibility of a future united federal Burma, if indeed that is what the people ultimately decide they want. If they do not, then an understanding of being separate but equal, as opposed to enemies, is a reframing that should help to alleviate some of the threats of civil war (at least against other officially-recognised ethnicities; the Rohingya situation being a notable exception). Border-based activists may not have been responsible for international sanctions, changes in government policy, or taking those guilty of oppression to the ICC, but their impact was/is considerable and, more importantly, real to the grassroots people inside the country.

In relation to relevance and future application, an awareness and understanding of these past successes, failures and underlying tensions on the Thai-Burma border could potentially prevent those attempting to engage with Burma-related issues (academic researchers, government and aid organisation policy-makers, INGO workers etc) from making very expensive, culturally inappropriate mistakes. Decisions that, while seemingly logical on paper, do not take the aforementioned concerns into account could be rejected at the grassroots implementation stage, and, due to *ah nah*, never have their shortcomings sufficiently unexplained. Additionally, much as existing studies exploring Croatia, Egypt and the Middle East provided meaningful examples that could be translated to offer insight into the Burma context, practitioners investigating other developing countries may also find the Thai-Burma example as useful for identifying relevant themes, trends and perspectives.

Conclusion

Developing a meaningful understanding of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' ultimately entailed designing a new framework that acknowledged the limitations of Bourdieu's field and capital tools, embraced Fligstein and McAdam's concepts of SAFs, resources and social skills, and could then be applied to make an original contribution that both advanced the involved theories and enhanced understanding of a complicated context. Analysing the perspectives of the interview subjects, the border-based '*Burma Movement*' then emerged as being perceived as consisting of two strategic action fields of divergent future intentions and operational styles; the macro-conscious *United Burma Movement* (considered to largely deal top-down

with government policy, legal reforms and national reconciliation), and the micro-led *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* (typically exhibiting a bottom-up approach centred on practical skills, knowledge and providing inspiration to the 'common people'). When defined in those terms, as different but overlapping arenas of engagement whose presence on the border was just a matter of temporary geographical convenience, then both were broadly successful.

While both contained issue and identity components, for the activities of the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* the issues were often perceived as secondary; or, more correctly, prioritising raising awareness about issues to the international community was secondary to directly addressing them and/or increasing skills and awareness amongst grassroots people. While some acts of the *United Burma Movement* could be considered as more visibly triumphant, many of the most successful activities of the *Grassroots Nationalities Movement* remained unseen beyond their immediate communities. Identifying needs for their people and addressing them, without having to involve external donors or international press, represented a potential for sustainability far beyond alternative operations that relied upon external financial assistance. Additionally, it also highlighted an underlying resolve and effectiveness that will be essential if the country is ever to achieve stability and peace.

The Thai-based '*Burma Movement*', at least in the form as previously identified, had already effectively ceased to exist by the time this thesis was completed, with most of the participants now living back in Burma. Whether the involvement of INGOs

and international governments on the border provided necessary logistical and financial assistance for the people to take control of their own government, laws and resources, or if their ultimately misguided interventions created dependency that disempowered the people and exacerbated existing conflicts, will be revealed in due course. The country may continue to implement tentative reforms without removing the disproportionate power held by the military and their cronies, or develop into a unified federal democracy, or even splinter into a variety of autonomous ethnic-minority states and/or independent nations; all are possible, as, unfortunately, is the prospect of civil war.

Whatever may happen to the country, or to those who were part of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*', the interview data and analysis did indicate that an appreciation of the divergent SAFs and resource perspectives would likely have aided understanding before and during the research, subsequently impacting on the relevance of activities, styles of implementation, and the productive application of social skills. An awareness of such past perspectives could also, if governments, policy makers and international donors were receptive to the relevance, offer insight and appreciation when considering the potential for fruitful collaboration and implementation in the future. More reflexive perspectives, as well as the acknowledgment of the implications of decisions made by stakeholders at all levels, would be universally beneficial. Whether or not any of the above will ever occur is, unfortunately, beyond the realm of this thesis.

EPILOGUE: POST-RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

The Fall of the Border-Based '*Burma Movement*'

While the body of this thesis explores the Thai-Burma border context within a particular window (late 2011 to early 2012), in the months following the end of the empirical research the border situation changed rapidly. Developments after the completion of the fieldwork included the easing of international sanctions, the release of numerous high-profile political prisoners, a succession of important international visitors, and ongoing (predominantly) positive press accounts of supposed change. All of this helped to convince the international community, including government agencies and donors, that the main problems had been solved and the building of a democratic civil society could begin. As several donors had expressed frustration at the seeming lack of progress on the border despite over 20 years of involvement (Border Consortium, 2009), with trainings on the same issues constantly repeated and numbers in refugee camps continuing to rise (Ko Htwe, 2012), many showed an undue eagerness to embrace the illusion of positive change.

This impression of the fight being over, with the democratic opposition being the victors, resulted in substantial amounts of funding being withdrawn from the border; either in favour of transitional and/or inside activity (Santamaria, 2013), or to other countries whose need now appeared greater. In practice, as travelling to around 80% of ethnic-minority areas was still not feasible for most outsiders (Ko Htwe, 2012), this effectively transferred support (both financial and moral) from ethnic-minority people in favour of Rangoon-based, Burman-centric initiatives and nationally-oriented causes, even though reports of human rights abuses in many ethnic-minority areas actually increased (NY Forum and SYCB, 2013). Although some organisations and individuals readily returned inside the country at the first opportunity, the assumption that border-based groups would relocate to ethnic-minority areas then became a self-fulfilling prophecy; the withdrawal of funding meant they had no other choice, but this was interpreted by donors as evidence of positive change. Support for refugee camps, migrant education, health clinics and externally displaced persons suffered, as donors (and the Thai government) began to question the legitimacy of their reasons for remaining. The border-based *Grassroots Nationalities Movement*, reluctant as a whole to accept there had been any substantial positive change in ethnic-minority areas (NY Forum and SYCB, 2013), gradually and unwillingly withered due to the dwindling access to funding and lack of international support/interest; ultimately, it was the *United Burma Movement* that emerged victorious.

As international engagement with Burma-related issues instead became centred inside the country, high levels of investment aid were promised, and press reports

reacted with almost hysterically positive enthusiasm; even though there was little to no impact anywhere outside of Rangoon (Fuller, 2012). This perception of improvement was further cemented by various accolades, including the International Crisis Group presenting President Thein Sein with their *'In Pursuit of Peace Award'* (ICG, 2013), and the awarding of the chair of ASEAN (Telegraph, 2011). One notable exception in the media coverage was in accounts of ethnic-minority conflict, which, although still not prominent, were now framed in more negative terms; rather than being depicted as noble freedom fighters or the helpless oppressed, they could instead be considered recalcitrant rebels who needed to be removed and/or silenced in the interests of democratic reform (Shayi, 2013). When asked about the international optimism surrounding ceasefires, a representative for an umbrella of ethnic-minority armies did not consider the government talks to symbolize a genuine commitment to national peace.

In my opinion the Burmese government is not seeking these agreements in order to establish genuine and lasting ceasefires but rather because it wants to deceive the international community... By negotiating ceasefires with each group separately the government shows that it is more interested in preventing unity amongst the ethnic nationalities rather than genuine peace talks. (Khaing Soe Naing Aung, quoted in Van Gaalen-Prentice, 2012)

As the international focus moved away from supporting the (seemingly no longer) oppressed, sanctions were quickly revised or removed and development opportunities encouraged, and then readily grasped, by international business. However, these changes not only resulted in a withdrawal of funds for those displaced or in conflict areas, but were documented as resulting in multiple

instances of land confiscation (legitimised by new Farmland Law bills)(Sandar Lwin, 2012) and forced labour in ethnic-minority areas (NY Forum and SYCB, 2013).

Now the international community compounds its failings by refusing to fund even the survival needs of ethnic victims, while the symbols of capitalist modernity, glossy red Coca Cola trucks, triumphantly arrive in lowland Burma as if the Berlin wall had just fallen. (Horton, 2013)

In accordance with the analysis of INGO engagement in other developing nations in Chapter Two, and the interview data reflecting various frustrations related to donors not really understanding situations or listening to the people involved, the real effectiveness of international involvement inside the country (and degree to which it was welcome) remained a point of conjecture. If one particularly forthright commentator was correct, then very little of what could have been learned from years of interacting with the border-based groups was then evident in the approaches of the donors, aid workers, photojournalists and researchers who were now able to work inside.

The NGOs are streaming into Burma like flies partying on crap on a hot summer day... the leeches of the NGO world and the wannabes and opportunists have flooded the streets of Yangon and brought with themselves huge egos, cultural insensitivity, a party-like mentality, and proposals and projects that make almost no sense at all. (Ko Tha Dja, 2012)

Subsequently, calls were made by those in positions of authority for more realistic perspectives, before all those involved became disappointed and disillusioned.

'The international community expects too much — they need to lower their expectations', said U Tin Maung Than, director of the Myanmar Development Resource Institute, a research organization with close ties to the president's office. *'And the people need to lower their expectations, too.'* (Fuller, 2012)

Critically, Aung San Suu Kyi stressed to international leaders that they needed to exercise caution and pay attention to community concerns when allocating large amounts of financial assistance to the country. As succinctly put to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, *'there is a need for people-centred aid rather than government-centred aid... it's not the sum, it's how it is given that's important'* (Vance, 2012).

While being unregistered on the border was accepted as a virtual inevitability due to illegal migration and the assumed temporality of residence, the same was not recognised as a barrier inside the country. While it had been theoretically possible to register NGOs and community groups since 1988 (Thein, 2013), they were subject to multiple restrictions, including no political involvement, personal checks of all staff and their associations, administrative charges and ongoing monitoring, all of which were subject to years-long processing delays (Nyein Nyein, 2012). In practice, registration was essentially unattainable to those who were not government affiliated or able to pay substantial bribes to cut the red tape, effectively excluding practically all ethnic-minority and grassroots organisations. However, for the majority of international donors *'the execution of a binding contract between donor and grantee hinges on the both parties existing as legal entities and therefore able to commit to fulfilling contract obligations'* (LRC, 2012: 12), thus their stipulations

would inevitably only consider registered groups as eligible to apply for grants. Ironically, not only did this then exclude established and trusted organisations who had already been receiving funding on the border, but it essentially fast-tracked applications from government cronies and/or corruption scams. The idea that money should be granted centrally, on the grounds that it would trickle down to all the people, was well noted by grassroots groups as ineffective, with the assumed result being that only a fraction of the funds would actually reach those that were the most in need.

Direct assistance from donors to grass-roots civil society organisations is more beneficial. If it goes through the UN, they have to deal with the government and there will be delays in the process because of red tape. There are many examples that show the public doesn't get the full support from donors when donations have to pass through many hands first. (Ko Htwe, 2012: 5)

The government response to this was not to ease the registration criteria, but instead to draft an Association Law that proposed to not only make all registrations subject to centralised government approval (without incentive, explanation or appeal), but also to make operating a non-registered organisation (either local or international) a criminal offence (MacGregor and Win Ko Ko Latt, 2013).

Post-Election Issues with NGO Operations Inside Burma and on the Border

As would become apparent in the months following the fieldwork, in response to similarly identified issues and concerns related to future donor/grassroots collaboration and the lack of voice given to the local people, alternative studies were also conducted inside the country in parallel with my border-based research;

notably, by Local Resource Centre (LRC, 2012) and Project 2049 Institute (Currie, 2012). Ultimately, both advised international donors, governments and aid agencies of the potential risks and barriers if donors and INGOs did not exercise caution and cultural sensitivity in planning and implementing their interactions and policy decisions, particularly in relation to engaging too heavily at the government level. While their specific examples were of course different, reassuringly the conclusions of both were broadly compatible and consistent with the research questions related to SAFs and resources.

The research conducted inside the country by the Local Resource Centre (completed in May 2012) documented how, as donor procedures and policies prevented most local organisations from directly accessing international money, complex networks of multi-layered sub-granting arrangements and collaborative relationships had developed. While acknowledging the difference between *United Burma* and *Grassroots Nationalities* concerns, and allowing at least some funding to reach grassroots communities, these networks proved to be administratively burdensome and the source of multiple conflicts. The study summarized that relations between INGOs and various levels of civil society organisations (CSOs) were impacted by -

...contractual conflicts, poor staff relations between INGO and local organization staff, compromises in CSO autonomy, pressure on civil society organizations by donors and INGOs to collaborate and build networks and, in several cases, INGOs acted as gatekeepers to the source donor relationship. (LRC, 2012: 7)

Particular examples highlighted that INGO involvement (and the entailed internationally-influenced perspectives) had the potential to inadvertently harm or hinder active society development in the longer term, with conflict arising from responsibility typically being pushed down to the community levels while the decision-making power remained with the donors (LCR, 2012). Short-term crises could emerge due to the pressures of the rigid timescales of reimbursable grants, or completion deadlines of partially-supported initiatives. Additionally, the focus on project-only support as opposed to core funding (which had been less of an issue on the border as residence in Thailand was assumed to only be temporary) limited the potential for building sustainable infrastructure(s), instead encouraging cycles of dependency and uncertainty. The importance of internationally-influenced values and resources in the appearance of skills and competence was evident, with one donor openly saying that local groups *'just don't currently have the capacity to fulfill the requirements of our granting mechanisms'* (LRC, 2012: 19). However, there were also suspicions regarding ulterior motives -

INGOs use budget lines and justification of "weak local capacity" to substantiate requests for funds to ensure their own organizational staff and sustainability are covered. (LRC, 2012: 19)

The valuing of international resources by individual staff could also lead to negative perceptions of CBOs as *'training grounds for INGOs'* (LRC, 2012: 15), with the loss of qualified staff not only removing their base of organisational and social skills, but also the potential for them to be perceived as capable direct partners rather than low-level affiliates.

Currie's analysis of Burma's transitional landscape and the implications for foreign assistance (Currie, 2012), specifically presented as a guide to donors, cautioned against being too swayed by heightened optimism in the pursuit of sustainable economic and political reform. In particular, she warned against being too keen to align development goals with the political authorities; the system being overwhelmed if donor interventions are not coordinated; that civil society does not necessarily lack capacity and could flourish if the environment was more favourable; and the importance of continuing cross-border assistance. Critically, she recognised that -

Ethnic communities will strongly resist any development agenda based solely or even primarily on an elite Burman consensus.... There is a worry that donors' development agendas could lead them to unintentionally support policies in ethnic areas that could reignite conflict. (Currie, 2012: 3)

Currie subsequently presented a list of recommendations, including transparency, civil ownership, patience, and the need for *'a diverse array of implementing mechanisms, especially for programming funds targeted at the grassroots and ethnic communities'* (Currie, 2012: 4), which appeared sensitive to the *Grassroots Nationalities* cause rather than purely conforming to *United Burma* models. However, there was also a call to *'establish agreed donor values and principles for behavior first, then work out the architecture for coordination'* (Currie, 2012: 75), clearly stating that an understanding of internationally-influenced values and perspectives would be considered essential before local community investment could be considered, effectively limiting the prospects of grassroots groups.

Both the *United Burma* and *Grassroots Nationalities* movement SAFs had always, in essence if not physical presence, been based inside. In the post-election climate some groups, especially those working with Karen, Shan and Karenni communities in areas bordering Thailand, could state reasonable cases for continuing to work on the border on geographical proximity grounds, as access from Thailand was still more functional than establishing a base in Rangoon. Those from other states, however, struggled to garner much support for remaining detached from areas where change was now seemingly not only possible, but occurring. One notable exception was women's groups, who appeared to have a stronger claim to remain detached on the basis of historical gender oppression and inequality of opportunity. While they too struggled when compared to the pre-election funding situation, their position was still considerably stronger than that of ethnic-minority human rights, environmental and youth organisations who were assumed to now be capable of engaging with their issues directly.

There were subsequently, as illustrated in Fig. A.1, a range of potential future career/engagement options related to the field and resource orientations that individuals had previously assumed while active on the Thai border.

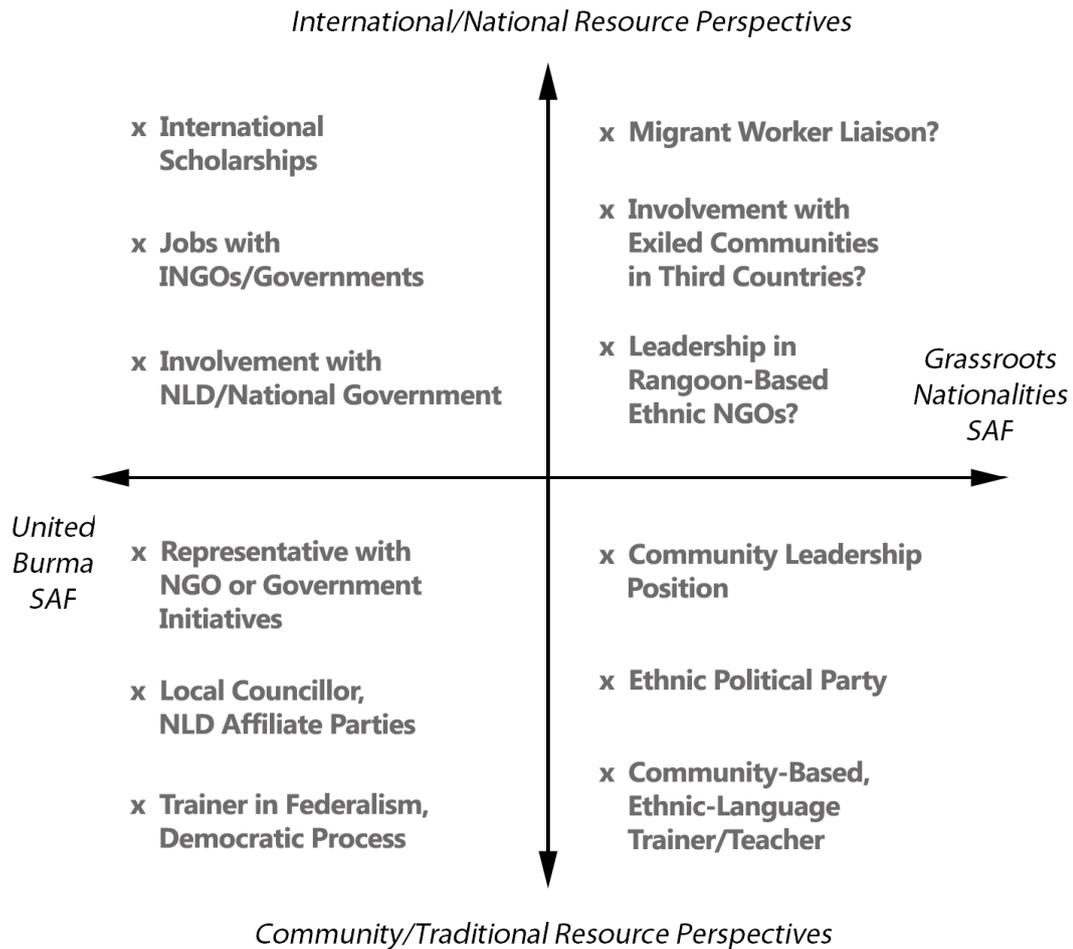


Fig. A. 1
Potential Career and Reintegration Paths for Former Thai-Based 'Burma Movement' Participants Inside the Country

As became evident, those who had maintained community/traditionally-influenced resource perspectives had clearer paths for how they could integrate themselves, and make meaningful contributions inside the country. Interestingly, this was the opposite to what appeared to be the optimal resource orientation while involved with international parties on the border. While those with an internationally-influenced resource perspective and a *United Burma* orientation had more evident opportunities, these would not necessarily be based in the country; by appealing to international sensibilities they were then very well positioned to continue

international integration, whether working within INGOs or as students/staff in alternative locations. There was even the risk that all internationally-influenced perspectives and values would be rejected within the country, with both national and grassroots leadership considering them unpatriotic and condescending. The least evident path was for those who had embraced international resources but not nationalism, as they ran the risk of being dispossessed from their home communities as well as being misaligned with international expectations of the country's future. This, again, is consistent with the analysis of the personal and professional repercussions of involving local people within INGOs in other countries, then withdrawing support/changing goals.

While an internationally-aware position was valid, even essential, when international engagement/involvement was required for securing the assistance needed to be able to operate effectively on the border, when situations changed, and returning to communities was (apparently) again an option, those who had embraced internationally-influenced resource perspectives could find themselves in an uneasy form of limbo. They could be dissociated from their home communities, not just geographically but by no longer sharing their values, while simultaneously being denied further international opportunities and/or relationships due to the perception that continued assistance was unnecessary. This sense of lack of belonging made the collapse of the border-based movement even more devastating for those who had come to value more internationally-influenced resources and outlooks, placed trust in them, competed on their terms, then found themselves abandoned by them. This particularly impacted on those from the

former *Grassroots Nationalities Movement*, because of their limited opportunities to utilise their internationally-influenced practical and social skills inside the country without then also embracing Rangoon/Burman-centric policies and operations. They effectively (and consistent with the assessment by Elyachar (2005) of post-NGO engagement in Cairo) became newly displaced, only this time it was primarily ideologically rather than physically.

Closing Perspectives on the Ongoing Situation

Essentially, in many respects, the Thai-based *'Burma Movement'* represented a failed endeavour. Border-based grassroots activists and their activities were not the instigators of democracy in Burma, as positive advances were instead (at least perceived as being) predominantly led by internal activists; border groups were largely dismissive of the election and cynical that it represented any true change. They did not manage to garner support for a Commission of Inquiry to the ICC (as internationally-influenced resources were not universally embraced), nor, despite numerous campaigns and reports, did they manage to stop environmentally-devastating development projects such as the Shwe Gas pipeline (as traditional/community-influenced resource orientations, and the *Grassroots Nationalities SAF*, were not sufficiently powerful to overturn decisions based on the economic greed of the elite). Their calls for the international community to exercise caution before removing sanctions were effectively ignored. Land confiscation laws were not implemented, in fact the easing of trade restrictions, Farmland Laws, and the government's post-election focus on business development made ethnic-minority land even more vulnerable than in past years. An expectation had been

established that international support and money would be available if requested, so finding that to no longer be the case left many feeling unheard and neglected.

Where once the international community stood for the voiceless in Burma, political players are now selling out for investment, and because of this, ethnic minorities, civil society groups and farmers now feel abandoned and betrayed. (Oliver, 2013)

Ultimately, the vast majority of those who had been part of the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' were not even able to secure sufficient support and financial backing to continue border-based operations in any significant way beyond 2012. As radical changes in approaches and geography were largely donor-led, the expectation was that donors and INGOs would adjust their mechanisms and policies to allow much greater levels of engagement, incorporating those from the borders who had already acquired considerable capacity; in practice, however, this was rarely the case.

After previously being encouraged to adopt Westernized organisational systems and policies (broadly conforming to organisational-entrepreneurship models of NSM theories), in the space of a few short months money was diverted from covering related expenses in preference to prioritising project-only initiatives (in accordance with resource mobilization perspectives). Ironically, some organisations who had already set the expectation that such endeavours should be salaried could no longer find the staff to plan and implement their projects unwaged; donors now considered such work to be of direct community benefit and, subsequently, the desire to commit time to them should not be dependent on external contributions. For many, the assumption remained that international donors would/should provide salaries

for working inside, although donors had generally only considered supporting Thai-based costs as a temporary and unavoidable circumstance related to being unable to work in Burma. The subsequent (and perfectly legitimate) response that bankrolling people through international funds to become involved in their own communities would create two-tier systems and unsustainable dependency could thus (due both to precedent and *ah nah*) be met with genuine shock and anger. Donors, however, interpreted this as self-serving, under the assumption that, if they were really committed and proud of their communities, they wouldn't even consider relying on external support in domestic situations.

So the Thai-based '*Burma Movement*' did not end in triumphant victory; instead, its presence and effectiveness in Thailand rapidly declined and faded due to the lack of sustainability. After the election, financial and moral support quickly dwindled due to the growing impression that those involved were attempting to continue to fight a war that had essentially already been won (Burma Link, 2013). Outsiders became increasingly suspicious that the primary motivation of those opposed to returning inside was *not* the human rights or political situation in their home areas, but their own powerbases, egos, standards of living and internationally-supported salaries. By attempting to continue on the border, expressing their intention to remain outside of the country for the foreseeable future, they were effectively attempting to establish a new *Ongoing Border-Based Movement* SAF. Subsequently, by asking for continued office running costs and working on the very types of reports and trainings that had previously been lauded, they could find themselves implied as self-serving, irrelevant and committed more to their personal comfort than their own

people. Ironically, those who had been the most enthusiastic at embracing and conforming to international-influenced resource perspectives then found themselves not only abandoned, but scorned and punished for displaying the very behaviours that had previously garnered approval.

As rapid (perhaps reckless) development occurs inside the country, and the gap between reality and international administrative rhetoric increases (Kessler, 2013), former members of the *'Burma Movement'* could well carry forward the impression that the international community did not ultimately act in the best interests of the grassroots people. They could instead hold the view that they were far too easily swayed by populist press and idealistic, nationalistic, utopian fantasies; to their considerable detriment. Whether any associated feelings of resentment and betrayal towards international parties will carry a legacy of implications for future trade and politics, or indeed civil war, will only be revealed in time.

APPENDIX BI: QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS - ENGLISH

ALL INFORMATION TO BE TREATED ANONYMOUSLY AND CONFIDENTIALLY

Are You: Male Female

Ethnicity: Arakan Pa-O Other

Religion: Buddhist Christian Animist Other

Age: 18-21 22-25 26-29 30-34 35-40

Are you a: Leader/Secretariat Staff Intern/Trainee

Education: Little or No High School BE High School Internship/NGO School
 Diploma/College University Postgraduate Degree

Within your organisation or community, how important do you think the following are to the position/status you are allowed to hold? Are any seen as being undesirable or negative ? (Please choose one from each line)

Age
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Gender
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Formal qualifications/schooling
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Languages (own, other ethnic, Asian, English)
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Skills (technical (video/web), public speaking, report-writing/research, organizational / administrative, networking)
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Years of experience (organizational)
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Years of experience (activism/prison)
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Personality (trusting/trustworthy, patient, welcoming)
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Intelligence
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Self-Confidence
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Family background – do their parents/siblings need to be powerful/successful?
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Financial status – how important is it to be rich?
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Contacts – how strong are their relationships (friends, other organizations, leaders, networks)
 Essential Very important Slightly Important Unimportant Negative Impact

Do you prefer to work with just one ethnicity?

Yes, only my own Mostly my own, sometimes collaborate Like a mixture
Mostly with different, sometimes own Only with different to my own

Do you/would you prefer to be led by someone of your own gender?

Man only Prefer man, would accept woman Not gender relevant
Prefer woman, would accept man Woman only

Do you/would you prefer to be led by someone of your own ethnicity/nationality?

Own only Prefer own, would accept other Not relevant
Prefer other Other ethnicity/nationality only

Is it okay to contradict your leader/teacher/parent/government?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Do you prefer to work with men or women?

Men only Majority men, some women Mixed
Majority women, some men Women only

Do think men or women make better leaders?

Men, always Men, usually Not gender relevant
Women, usually Women, always

When do you generally feel most alert/ focused?

Morning/wake early Afternoon-evening/sleep late No pattern

I do not like to juggle several activities at the same time.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly Disagree

People should not try to do many things at once.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly Disagree

I am comfortable doing several things at the same time.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly Disagree

Do you think you are typical for your community/culture in this way of working?

Typical Untypical

What would you like to do in the future? (please tick all that apply)

Further Education Resettled in another country Back in Burma
Working in current organisation Working in different organisation
Working for private company Married Children

APPENDIX BII: QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS - BURMESE

အချက်အလက်များအားလူသိရှင်ကြားမဖြစ်စေရအောင် လျှို့ဝှက်စွာသိမ်းဆည်းထားမည်

လိင်။ ကျား မ

လူမျိုး။ ရခိုင် ပအိုဝ်း အခြား

ကိုးကွယ်သည့်ဘာသာ။ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ ခရိယာန် နတ်ကိုးကွယ်ခြင်း အခြား

အသက်။ 18-21 22-25 26-29 30-34 35-40

တာဝန်။ ခေါင်းဆောင် (သို့) အတွင်းရေးမှူး ဝန်ထမ်း အလုပ်သင်

ပညာအရည်အချင်း။ ပြင်ပပညာရေး အခြေခံပညာအထက်တန်း အလုပ်သင် (သို့) NGO မှ ဖွင့်လှစ်သောကျောင်း
 ကောလိပ်၊ ဒီပလိုမာ တက္ကသိုလ် ဘွဲ့လွန်

သင့်အဖွဲ့အစည်းနှင့် အသိုင်းအဝိုင်းအတွင်း အောက်ဖော်ပြပါအချက်များမှာ ဘယ်လောက်အရေးပါကြောင်း သင်ထင်မြင်ယူဆပါသလဲ။ အပြုသဘောမဆောင်သည့်အကျိုးသက်ရောက်မှုရှိပါသလား။ (တစ်ခုခုကိုရွေးပါ)

အသက်
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

လိင်ကွဲပြားမှု
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ပညာရေး
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ဘာသာစကားများ (ကိုယ်ပိုင်၊ အခြားတိုင်းရင်းသားဘာသာစကား၊ အာရှ၊ အင်္ဂလိပ်)
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ကျွမ်းကျင်မှု (နည်းပညာ (ဗီဒီယို၊ ဝက်ဘ်ဆိုဒ်)၊ လူထုရှေ့တွင်စကားပြောခြင်း၊ အစီရင်ခံစာရေးသားခြင်း၊ သုတေသနပြုလုပ်ခြင်း၊ အဖွဲ့အစည်းဆိုင်ရာ အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးနှင့် ကွန်ယက်တည်ဆောက်ခြင်း)
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ဖြတ်သန်းမှု အတွေ့အကြုံ (အဖွဲ့အစည်းဆိုင်ရာ)
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ဖြတ်သန်းမှု အတွေ့အကြုံ (တက်ကြွလှုပ်ရှားမှု သို့မဟုတ် ယုံကြည်ချက်ကြောင့်အကျဉ်းကျမှု)
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်ရေး (ယုံကြည်မှု၊ စိတ်ရှည်မှု၊ ပျူငှာစွာဆက်ဆံတတ်မှု)
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

သိရှိနားလည်နိုင်စွမ်းရှိသောဉာဏ်ပညာ
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

မိမိကိုယ်ကိုယုံကြည်မှုရှိခြင်း
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

မိသားစုနောက်ခံသမိုင်း - မိဘ ညီအစ်ကိုမောင်နှမများ ဩဇာအာဏာရှိကြသူများဖြစ်ဖို့လိုအပ်ပါသလား
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

ငွေကြေးချမ်းသာမှု (ငွေကြေးချမ်းသာမှုမှာဘယ်လောက်အရေးကြီးပါသလဲ)
 အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

အဆက်အသွယ် - ဆက်ဆံရေးဘယ်လောက်ကောင်းလဲ (သူငယ်ချင်း၊ အခြားအဖွဲ့အစည်း၊ ခေါင်းဆောင်၊ ဆက်စပ်မှု)
အဓိကကျသည် လွန်အရေးကြီးသည် နည်းနည်းကြီးသည် အရေးမကြီးပါ အဆိုးကျိုးဖြစ်စေသည်

လူမျိုးတမျိုးတည်းနှင့်သာ အလုပ်လုပ်ချင်တဲ့ဆန္ဒရှိပါသလား
ဟုတ်ကဲ့မိမိလူမျိုးနှင့်သာ အများအားဖြင့်မိမိလူမျိုးနှင့်သာ၊ တစ်တစ်အခြားလူမျိုးနှင့်ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်လို
တိုင်းရင်းသားပေါင်းစုံ အများအားဖြင့်အခြားလူမျိုးနှင့်၊ တစ်တစ်အခြားလူမျိုးနှင့် အခြားလူမျိုးနှင့်သာ

မိမိနှင့် လိင်အမျိုးအစားတူသူ၏ ခေါင်းဆောင်မှုကိုသာ ခံယူလိုပါသလား
အမျိုးသားခေါင်းဆောင်မှုသာ အမျိုးသားကိုဦးစားပေးသည်၊ အမျိုးသမီးကိုလည်းလက်ခံနိုင်သည်
အမျိုးသားဖြစ်စေ၊ အမျိုးသမီးဖြစ်စေ
အမျိုးသမီးကိုဦးစားပေးသည်၊ အမျိုးသားကိုလည်းလက်ခံနိုင်သည် အမျိုးသမီးခေါင်းဆောင်မှုသာ

မိမိနှင့် လူမျိုးတူသူ၏ခေါင်းဆောင်မှုကိုသာခံယူလိုပါသလား
မိမိလူမျိုးသာ မိမိလူမျိုးကိုဦးစားပေးသည်၊ အခြားလူမျိုးကိုလည်းလက်ခံနိုင်သည် လူမျိုးမရွေး
အခြားလူမျိုးကိုဦးစားပေးသည် အခြားလူမျိုးကိုသာ

သင်၏ ခေါင်းဆောင်၊ ဆရာ၊ မိဘ၊ အစိုးရတို့ကို ဆန့်ကျင်ဘက်ပြုလုပ်နိုင်ပါသလား
ဘယ်တော့မှ ရှားရှားပါးပါး တစ်တစ် အများအားဖြင့် အမြဲတမ်း

သင်အနေဖြင့် အမျိုးသားနှင့် အမျိုးသမီးတို့ ဘယ်သူတွေ့နေတဲ့ဖက်လုပ်ကိုင်ရတာ ပိုကြိုက်သလဲ
အမျိုးသားနှင့်သာ အမျိုးသားအများစု၊ အမျိုးသမီးအချို့နှင့်သာ အမျိုးသားနှင့်အမျိုးသမီးရောနှော
အမျိုးသမီးအများစု၊ အမျိုးသားအချို့နှင့်သာ အမျိုးသမီးနှင့်သာ

အမျိုးသားနှင့် အမျိုးသမီး မည်သူကခေါင်းဆောင်မှု ပိုကောင်းပါသလဲ
အမျိုးသားသာ အခါအားလျော်စွာ အမျိုးသား အမျိုးသား၊ အမျိုးသမီး မည်သူမဆို
အခါအားလျော်စွာ အမျိုးသမီး အမျိုးသမီးသာ

သင့်အနေဖြင့် မည်သည့်အချိန်တွင် ပိုမိုအာရုံစိုက်မှုရှိပါသလဲ
နံနက် အိပ်ယာထချိန် နေ့လည်၊ ညနေခင်း (သို့) ညအိပ်ချိန် အအချိန်တိအကျမရှိ

တချိန်တည်းတွင် အလုပ်နှစ်မျိုးသုံးမျိုးအား တပြိုင်နက်တည်းပြုလုပ်ခြင်းကို ကျွန်ုပ်မကြိုက်ပါ
အလေးအနက်သဘောတူသည် သဘောတူသည် သဘောလည်းတူသည်၊ သဘောလည်းမတူ
သဘောမတူပါ လုံးဝသဘောမတူပါ

လူတစ်ယောက်အနေဖြင့်တချိန်တည်းတွင် အလုပ် အမျိုးအစားအများကြီး မလုပ်ဆောင်သင့်ပါ
အလေးအနက်သဘောတူသည် သဘောတူသည် သဘောလည်းတူသည်၊ သဘောလည်းမတူ
သဘောမတူပါ လုံးဝသဘောမတူပါ

တချိန်တည်းတွင် အလုပ်နှစ်မျိုးသုံးမျိုးအား တပြိုင်နက်တည်းပြုလုပ်ခြင်းကို သဘောကျသည်
အလေးအနက်သဘောတူသည် သဘောတူသည် သဘောလည်းတူသည်၊ သဘောလည်းမတူ
သဘောမတူပါ လုံးဝသဘောမတူပါ

သင်ယခုလုပ်နေသည့်အလုပ်ကြောင့် သင်၏အသိုင်းအဝိုင်း၊ ယာဉ်ကျေးမှုတွက် သင်အရေးပါသည်ဟု ထင်မြင်မိပါသလား
အရေးပါသည် အရေးမပါ

အနာဂတ်မှာ သင်ဘာလုပ်ချင်ပါသလဲ (သင်နှင့်ကိုက်ညီသည့်အရာအားလုံးကို အမှတ်အသားပြုလုပ်ပေးပါ)
ကျောင်းဆက်တက်မည် နိုင်ငံခြားတွင်အခြေချနေထိုင်လိုသည် မြန်မာပြည်သို့ပြန်မည်
လက်ရှိလုပ်ကိုင်နေသောအဖွဲ့တွင် ဆက်လုပ်သွားမည် အခြားအဖွဲ့တွင်အလုပ် လုပ်ကိုင်သွားမည်
ပုဂ္ဂလိကကုမ္ပဏီတွင် အလုပ်လုပ်မည် အိမ်ထောင်ပြုမည် ကလေးရှိနေလိမ့်မည်

အချက်အလက်များကို ဖြည့်စွက်ပေးသည့်အတွက် အထူးကျေးဇူးတင်ရှိပါသည်။

APPENDIX C: INDICATIVE QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Ethnicity

If someone had never heard of your culture, how would you explain it to them? What makes it different? Any particular customs, habits, history, stories, sayings?

Are there any ethnicities your culture traditionally see as rivals? Friends? On what grounds?

Do you think different ethnicities like to work in different ways? Examples?

Would you date/marry someone from a different ethnicity? International?

Do you like to work with international people? What do you think you can/do learn from them?

Do they do anything in ways that you find strange? Have different values or priorities?

Leadership

What does it mean to have power? Do you currently have it? Would you like it?

What personality traits do you think make a good leader?

What personality traits do you think make a bad leader?

Throughout your life, people will have made decisions that have had a direct impact on your life. Can you give an example when someone who had authority over you – parent, older sibling, community leader, teacher, government official, dominant friend – made a good choice? Did you think it was a good choice then, or do you only see it as that now?

Can you give an example of a bad choice? Was the choice itself bad, or just the end result?

Would you like to lead your organisation/community? Why? What would you be good at it?

If you were choosing someone to join your organisation, what skills, personality, background would you be looking for? Would these be different if they were to be your junior, equal, senior?

Gender

Do you think men and women value different things? Such as?

Are women better than men at anything in particular?

Are men better than women at anything in particular?

Did your parents make gender distinctions between you and your siblings? Did your teachers? Community leaders?

Are there any traditional stories from your culture that illustrate the differences between men and women?

Are there any behaviours that are considered as acceptable at different ages for men and women?

When you were a child, what games did you like to play?

Context

How would you define '*community*'?

How would you define '*culture*'?

How would you define - '*The Burma Movement*? '*Grassroots Burma Movement*'?

Is there another term you prefer?

Why do you think that some groups within the Burma movement organise themselves primarily on the basis of identity (ethnicity and/or gender) rather than issues?

Current changes inside Burma are being viewed as largely positive by the international community (easing of restrictions, visits by foreign dignitaries etc.), what do you think?

What do you think will be happening inside Burma in five years?

How much longer do you think groups will be able/ want to operate on the Thai border?

What would you like to do in the future?

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