Knowledge-Scape of Research on Politics of Environment in Thailand

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Abstract

This research aims to study knowledge-scape of research on politics of environment in Thailand. The qualitative research is used for compiling, reviewing, and analyzing 99 academic paper works in Thailand. The research findings revealed that there were various academic studies about the politics of environment in Thailand. These works are categorized into 18 main issues; namely social movements, overview and review articles, social construction of identity and nature, social issues and conservation, feminist political ecology and gender, natural resource management, urban political ecology, land tenure and access, international development, corporations and environmental justice, environmental politics on public policy, natural threat, political ecology of health, climate change and carbon, indigenous people and environmental politics, border issues and struggles, migration and environment and postcolonial theory. However, the politics of environment are mostly various and complicated. Recommendation from this study were in-depth study, specification and expansion of study including more researched for academic purposes and research papers to transit for practical actions.
Keywords: Knowledge-Scape, Politics of Environment, Green Politics, Political Ecology, Thailand

Introduction

The study of relationship of human and the surrounding environment both natural and non-natural reveals that human being is part of all environments, but they are often arrogant (Butin, 2012: 172-174). They always consider themselves as the "master" of nature and nature is primarily intended to serve human needs (Wantana, 2008: 213). This makes people neglect environmental problems. The environmental problems do not cause sudden effect. Moreover, human believes that natural resources are still abundant enough to meet human needs without competition. However, in fact, it is not true. If flashing back and studying the history of international politics, we can find that one of the causes of wars and disputes between countries including the conflicts in the country are all caused by the scramble for important natural resources (Klaitubtim, 2007: 1-3). It can be seen from the 1970s, when the oil crisis of 1973 and 1979 caused people to start realizing that the survival of the state did not solely depend on military matters that could threaten their livelihoods, but the economic vulnerability was also important. Therefore, the security of the state was broadened to cover the access to "vital resource". Nevertheless, the latter problem of stability came into the environment. Especially in the 1980s, the Brundtland Report proposed in 1987 stated that "environmental threats are becoming global threats." Thus, the environmental degradation and climate change are beginning to be debated both on the national and international forum since then (Chainikom, 2018: 20-22).

Therefore, it is undeniable that environmental issues are related to politics. Awareness of ecological degradation and political conflicts resulting from natural resource competition and uneven and equitable distribution of resources has led to efforts to address these issues. An alternative political approach "Green Politics" or "Politics of Environment" is proposed.
This article therefore aims to study and explore the knowledge area of political research on the environment of Thailand in order to have an academic reference study source including further debate and research on environmental politics.

Approaches for the Study of Politics of Environment

In the global context or even for Thai society and Thai academic circles at present, despite the increasing awareness and attention to the issue of relationship between politics and the environment, the study on this issue is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. The scope of interest in the subject is too broad for the knowledge of a particular discipline to be fully covered (Wantana, 2008: 214). It can be seen in Political ecology: An emerging research agenda in Third-World studies of Bryant (1992) exploring the body of knowledge in Third World political ecology. The research elements or issues in the framework of political ecology analysis are divided into three components. The first one is the contextual sources of environmental change. The second is the conflict in access to resources while the third one is the political reflection following environmental change which can be described as follows.

1) The contextual source of environment change is the element of relationship among government policy, states, and capitalism. This section of study is intended to reflect the growing impact of state and international dynamics on the global environment on which economic and political systems are interdependent. The government policy therefore influences human-environment interaction in determining the priorities and actions of government. It plays an important role in defining environmental discourse as government policies are the result of contention between different groups of people who want to formulate policies. The state is like a theater where resources, ownership and authority compete against one another. The process of state policy making included social conflict and contention as well as the interests of the state. The public policy that came out was like winning or losing in the battle. Government policy considerations must not be isolated. They must be linked to other policies as well.

2) The conflict in access to resources is the exploration of relationship among access rights, local struggles and ecological transformation which highlights the limitations and other disadvantaged opportunities in society's struggle to protect the environment and the way of life. This is to understand the conflicts of access or rights in terms of historical development and in the present time. The analysis of access rights conflicts requires a historical analysis to help realizing resource access conflicts which are fundamental to the development of human societies formed by political, social, and ecological factors. The conflicts in access to resources are part of the complexity of conflicts from proprietary systems and institutions that control access and use of resources with multiple, complex, and overlapping rights. It consists of both formal and informal ownership. Therefore, the concept of property right regimes is one of the key concepts of political ecology as the environmental issues are conflicting claims for the benefits of each party.

3) The political ramifications of environment change demonstrate the inequality of economic and social impacts and the political process. It focuses on studying the movement of the powerless who are in the downward spiral of environmental degradation.

Meanwhile, in Doing political ecology inside and outside the academy of Batterbury (2015: 31-32, 40), the academic and research papers published in journals 1999-2014 on political ecology were examined. They appeared in the topics, keywords and abstracts of 147 articles which can be classified into 27 volumes of study; 1) Ranching, 2) Regional political ecology,

3) Social movements, 4) Feminist political ecology and gender, 5) Postcolonial theory, 6) Natural threat, 7) Migration and environment, 8) Border issues and struggles, 9) Animal-human relations, 10) International development theory/practice, 11) Irrigation systems, 12) Political ecology of health, 13) Climate change and carbon, 14) Indigenous knowledge, 15) Land tenure and access, 16) Natural resource management, 17) Corporations and environmental justice, 18) Neoliberalism and post-capitalism, 19) Social construction of identity and nature, 20) Overview and review articles, 21) Urban political ecology, 22) Forestry: social and political issues, 23) Privatization of water, 24) Mining and oil, 25) Fishing, 26) Social issues and conservation, and 27) Food and agrarian change.

In this study, the researcher chose Batterbury's approach to study the environmental political issues as a framework for analyzing and interpreting the contents for further classification of Thai environmental political studies issues.
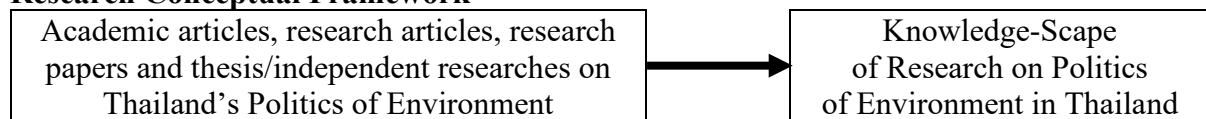
Research Conceptual Framework

Academic articles, research articles, research papers and thesis/independent researches on Thailand's Politics of Environment	→	Knowledge-Scape of Research on Politics of Environment in Thailand

Figure 1 Research conceptual framework

Research Methodology

The research on knowledge-scape of research on politics of environment in Thailand is the qualitative research in the form of documentary research. The research is in literature and researches on the relationship between politics and the Thai environment studied, published, or formulated as policy proposal during the year 1997-2018. The Documentary Analysis is conducted to know the development of knowledge and educational results on the relationship between politics and the environment of Thailand.

This research has the content scope on the study of literature in the category of academic articles, research articles, research papers, and thesis/independent researches on the politics of environment from research databases that have been published in journals in the TCI database and the database of ThaiLIS (Thailand Library Integrated System) of the Office of the Higher Education Commission. The research was conducted to find the number of academic articles, research articles, and research papers on politics of environment in Thailand from 1997 to 2018 by searching for topics, keywords and abstracts using keywords such as politics, environment, political ecology, movement, etc. Then, the survey is conducted on the specific study documents to determine which studies are academic articles, research articles, research papers, and thesis/independent researches in order for the classification to identify educational issues in the next step left only the work that really deals with the relationship between politics and the environment on various issues.

Research Findings

From the study, it was found that there were academic articles, research articles, research papers and thesis/independent researches on the politics of environment from research databases that have been published in journals in the TCI database and ThaiLIS of the Office of the Higher Education Commission. Which has searched the data to find the number of academic articles, research articles and research papers on the politics of the environment in Thailand from 1997 to 2018 by searching for keywords such as politics, environment, political ecology, movement. The students can collect 161 academic papers, research articles from TCI database, and research and thesis/independent research from the database of the ThaiLIS for 209 volumes as shown in Figure 2.
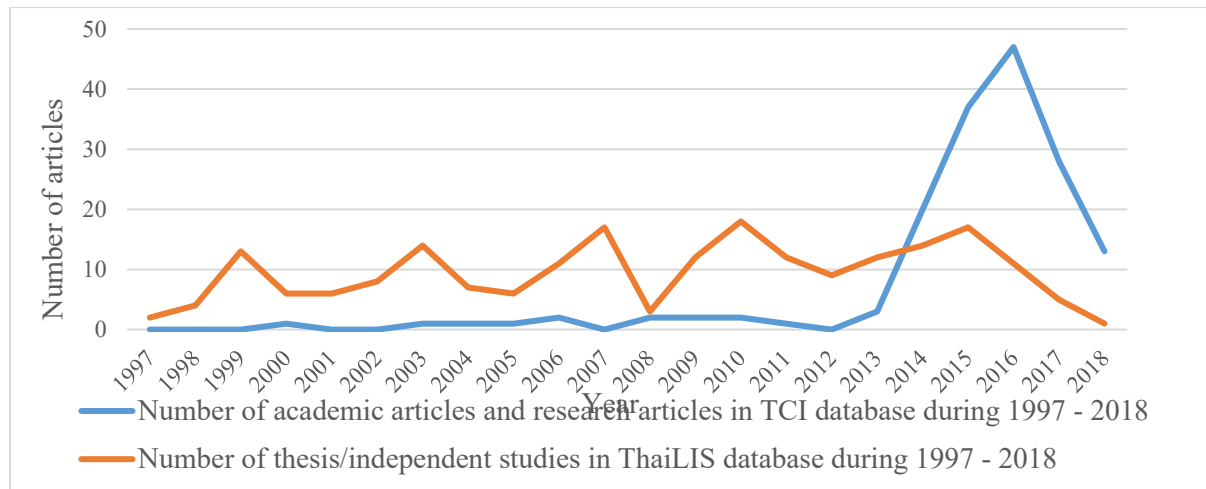
Figure 2 The number of academic articles and research articles in the TCI database and the number of research papers and thesis/independent researches from the database of ThaiLIS during 1997-2018.

From Figure 2, it is found that there are academic articles and research articles from the TCI database between 1997 and 2018, totaling 161 volumes. In 2016, there were academic articles and research articles the most with 47 volumes, followed by year 2015 with 37 volumes and 2017 with 28 volumes, respectively, and thesis/independent research from the database of ThaiLIS during the year 1997-2018 amounting to 209 volumes. In 2010, there were researches and thesis/independent studies for the most number of 18 volumes, followed by 2007 and 2015 with 17 volumes, and 2014 with 14 volumes, respectively.

When surveying specific study documents to determine which studies are academic articles, research articles, research papers, and thesis/independent researches on the relationship between politics and the environment according to the political ecology study approach, it was found that there were 66 academic articles, research articles from TCI database, and researches and thesis/independent researches from the database of ThaiLIS for 33 volumes as shown in Figure 3.
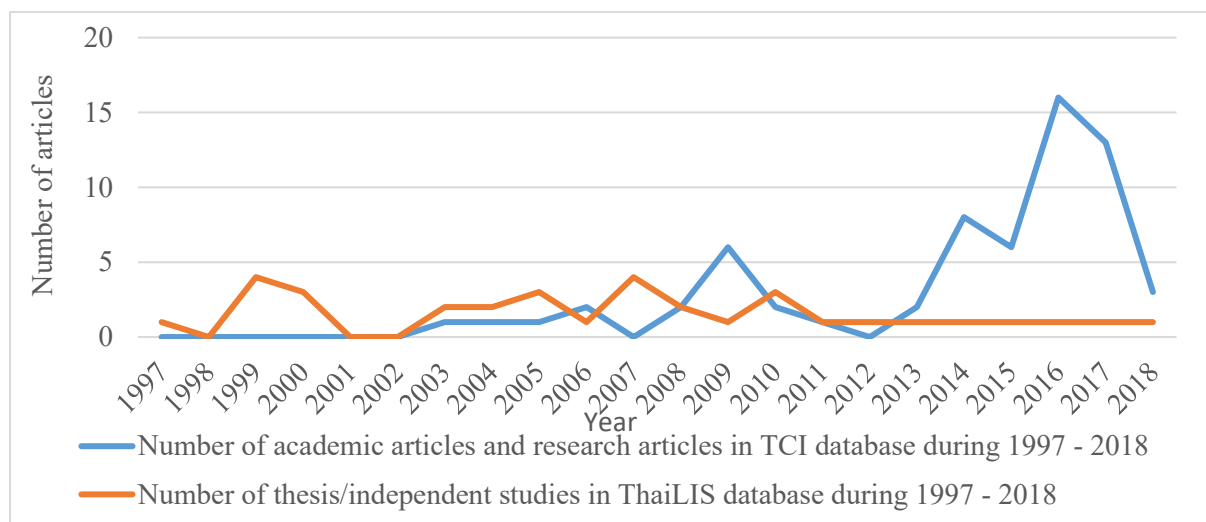

Figure 3 shows the number of academic articles and research articles on the relationship between politics and the environment according to the political ecology study approach in the TCI database and the number of research papers and thesis/independent researches according to the political ecology study approach from the database of ThaiLIS during 1997-2018.

From Figure 3, it is found that there are academic articles and research articles on the relationship between politics and the environment according to the political ecology study approach from the TCI database during 1997-2018 for 6 6 volumes. In 2016, there were academic articles and research articles the most with 16 volumes, followed by year 2017 with 13 volumes and 2014 with 8 volumes, respectively, and thesis/independent research from the database of ThaiLIS during the year 1997-2018 amounting to 209 volumes. In 2010, there were researches and thesis/independent studies according to the political ecology study approach from the database of ThaiLIS for during 1997-2018 for 33 issues. In 1999 and 2007, there are the greatest number of 4 volumes of researches, thesis, and independent studies, followed by 2000, 2005, and 2010 with 3 volumes, respectively.

From academic articles, research articles, research papers, and thesis/independent researches on the politics of environment from research databases that have been published in journals in the TCI database and the database of ThaiLIS of the Office of the Higher Education Commission which has searched the data to find the number of academic articles, research articles and research papers on Thai environmental politics from 1997 to 2018 for a total of 99 volumes. The researcher was able to classify the study of environmental politics into 18 issues. The number of articles can be classified according to educational issues on politics and environmental issues as shown in Figure 4.
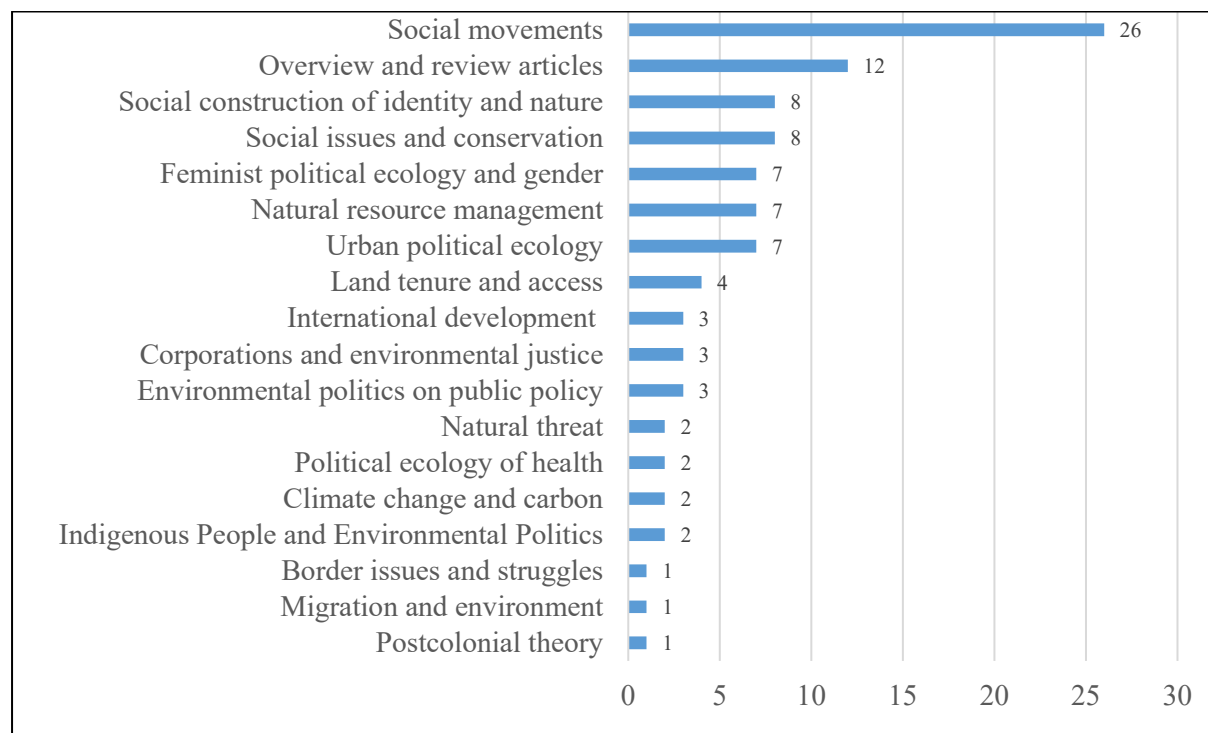

Figure 4 The number of academic articles, research articles, and researches on the politics of environment of Thailand during 1997-2018 classified following the issues of study.

From Figure 4, it was found that the issues that were studied the most were 26 volumes of social movements, followed by overview and review articles consisting of 12 volumes, social issues and conservation and social construction of identity and nature consisting of 8 volumes each. Urban political ecology, natural resource management, and feminist political ecology and gender consist of 7 volumes each. Land tenure and access consists of 4 volumes. Environmental politics on public policy, corporations and environmental justice, and international development consist of 3 volumes each. Indigenous People and environmental politics, natural threat, political ecology of health and climate change and carbon consist of 2 volumes each.

The least study issues are border issues and struggles, migration and environment, postcolonial theory consist of 3 volumes each.

Discussion and Conclusion

The studies on environmental social movement issues over the past decades were often the studies on civil society movements driven by people in rural or wooded areas. For example, in the politics of grassroots environmental movements in Thai society (Pintobtaeng, 1997), Urban Environmentalism: A case study of the Taodum forest watch network, Kanchanaburi. (Plengsiang, 2003), Dynamics of the Movement and Struggle for the Recovery of a Community's Livelihood from the Impact of Pak Mun Dam (Jaitrong & Manorom, 2014). Despite some success in practice, it takes a long time along with the loss during the fight. This is consistent with Ostrom (1990: 183) considering statist and market oriented approaches are often unsuccessful in solving environmental problems and managing the environment as it should be in practice. Especially in Thailand, movements tend to occur only when there is a problem. Jermsittiparsert (2017) pointed out about the struggles of the villagers who have not yet reached the civil society stage. People's consciousness is not yet much in regards to the care of the public's resources. When it was affected in the matter of the poverty, people came out to fight for rights. Successful civil society will be driven by middle-class people who are well equipped and free from stagnation. This agrees with Smith & Pangsapa (2008) stating that urban activism has more potential to drive. As most of the members have the ability to use technology and have management skills, it is possible to access information and build more networks.

As the number of studies on urban political ecology in Thailand began to grow, for example, in the work on Sustainable of Urban Green Space. Management in Compact City (Ruthirako, 2013), the city studies and the Paradigm of Urban Knowledge (Pechpakdee, 2016), Urban Recovery Approach Dindang Community Bangkok (Silamom et al., 2017) which is a challenge to study environmental politics that shifts from the study of people's power relations through the use of resources that are often studied in rural or rural areas, forest to urban area. This is in accordance with the work of Zimmer (2010: 350) arguing that education on urban ecology is an increasingly challenging issue, especially in urban areas of developing countries to a bigger city that means there will be more environmental problems.

The issue of borders and struggle, for example, in the work on Environmental Movement: A Case Study of Greenpeace Southeast Asia (Thailand) (Cheevapattananuwong, 2005), Environmental Migrants and International Law (Shytov, 2016). It is another point of study that, although not very well studied, especially on the relationship between politics and the environment in Thailand. The challenge of this issue is the need for transnational collaborative networks to empower and strengthen the process of delivering alternatives to managing ecosystems and resources across borders. In addition, the issue of social and environmental problems and impacts arising from state-sponsored or large-scale cross-border development projects pose a serious challenge to the movement of civil society in the country. We can see that calling locally and confining to one network may no longer be enough to negotiate broader issues across state borders.

The survey of knowledge-scape of research on politics of environment of Thailand gives an overview of the amount of academic and research work related to environmental politics on diverse and complex issues. There are in-depth, specific studies and the study area has been expanded more. Therefore, the study of the relationship of politics and the environment is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary from the beginning because the scope of interest of a subject is too broad to cover all the knowledge of a particular field. Wantana (2008: 214) said that it has a cross-disciplinary nature which is a social science and scientific concept. In particular, issues of social mobility, organization and networking, cyber communities,

academic communities and the middle class can jointly solve problems as a result of development that does not pay attention to people and the environment has influenced political movements from civil society in various forms to negotiate power from the state through defining the meaning of a new set of developments which is a development that takes into account the environment and natural resources. It leads to political movements later and is characterized by the activity of going through states or across states. Although the overall political ecological study, review, analysis of literature and the study of various theories do not involve the scientific work, it tends to increase their correlation as can be found in the study of political economics, social power, ecology, and conservation of nature which combine the social sciences and the environmental sciences in explaining the relationship between society and nature.

Therefore, the study of environmental political issues has expanded to a broader field of study and expand the territory into an area of stability. It is tied to the professional line and expertise of the person. For example, those in the environmental industry saw that Model of Environmental Security is an important issue. Those in the public health community may see the threat of disease outbreaks as a key issue including the problem of Communicable Disease and Security. One of the new security problems that many states must face is environmental change. In some cases, to be more specific, it is Climate Change and Security which has a huge impact on causing natural disasters. It often causes great damage to the lives and properties of people in society and at the same time affecting the security of the state itself. It must be responsible for the damage suggesting that environmental issues can become a revolutionary policy system at both national and international levels. The environment still needs to be clearly defined.

However, as the conduct of documentary research, academic papers, research papers and researches have the limitation in accessing the full texts and texts of the researchers, the study of literature, academic articles and researches rely mainly on reading the abstracts of these articles to preliminary filter the number of academic articles, research articles and researches before going to read the full article as it can be accessed in the database.

Acknowledgement

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