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DIGITALIZATION WITH CITIZEN VERIFICATION AND CONTROL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Poverty remains an undeniable social issue that is deeply rooted in the social fabric. The state welfare card policy under the leadership of General Prayut Chan-o-cha was created as guidelines for improving life quality and ending poverty by helping with living expenses, finding opportunities to access public services, and developing vocational training.The state relies on specific identity representations in the neoliberal world in the absence of authentic empirical evidence. Perceptive ambiguities lead to an attempt to create a field of meaning that is static and numerable until it becomes a characteristic that the state can control and predict. The more it is combined with the proof mechanism, the more it is conducive to the growth of capital groups and political networks aggravating international poverty despite repeated suppression. Those uncounted or overlooked by the system are challenged for survival and activities that they are allowed to do. Results are that the state welfare card represents a set of governmental ideas with clear control and determination goals. Poverty and politics remain intertwined, as the card helps societal denizens learn to prove their own poverty and be aware of new rules by which poverty is reduced according to the state perception framework. As a result, the state welfare card is a basis for creating more poverty under the neoliberal drive.

Keywords:

Digitalization, Poverty, Neoliberalism

1. Introduction

Theoretical Framework: Technological Determinism

In explaining the relationship between technology and people, one might refer to a group of theories known as Technological Determinism (TD), which posit that technology acts as a determining force. This theory is a branch of political economy that focuses on analyzing the productive forces, particularly the advancements in technology. It emphasizes the perspective that the technology of any given era determines cultural patterns. Marshall McLuhan, a leading figure in this theory, argued that any message delivered through a medium or technology leads to changes in the scale, speed, or patterns of human activities. The study of the relationship between communication technology and society can be approached from two perspectives:

- The first question asks what impact changes in communication technology will have on society, institutions, and individuals. This perspective is based on the belief that technology is the primary cause or "prime mover" driving changes in other areas.
- The second question asks, conversely, what social conditions give rise to various technological advancements. This perspective views social conditions as the primary cause, with technological development being the outcome.

The concept of TD aligns with the political economy theory of media, which holds that the base social structure (i.e., the economy), determines the nature of the superstructure, which includes consciousness, ideology, and social institutions (Kanjana Kaewthep, 2001, pp. 223-229). This implies that technology can shift human experience at the individual level through the relationship between media forms and human sensory experiences, influencing how people see, hear, and touch in different times and places (Passara Pongsookwechkul, 2011, p. 19).

The emergence of new media in society necessitates a reevaluation of the concept of TD to demonstrate the evolving realities and impacts of diverse media. This is because traditional technology, which once remained relatively unchanged in content delivery over time, has now evolved. Modern communication technology has become more intelligent, not only transmitting messages but also enabling interaction (Livingstone, 2003). Since its inception in the early 20th century, TD has developed into two sub-categories, generally referred to as "Hard Determinism" (or metaphysical determinism), which explains the perspective on free will. It posits that reality is incompatible with free will; and, thus, free will

does not truly exist. Philosophers who adhere extreme determinism (Hard Determinism) believe that everything occurs due to causes, and everything in the universe operates on the principle of cause and effect.

Humans, therefore, do not have true freedom, and the actions they believe to be free are merely an illusion. In the modern era, where science is the primary foundation of knowledge, the concept of Determinism has become even stronger, as modern science believes that everything can be explained by causes and, therefore, predicted. Some people believe that everything humans do is determined by genes and heredity. On the other hand, those who strongly believe in freedom (i.e., individual agency) argue against Hard Determinism, asserting that humans have freedom beyond the constraints of causality. They believe that human actions are not determined by causes but by human will as the agent. These proponents argue that, if everything were predetermined, humans would not be able to take responsibility for their actions, and moral responsibility would not exist because an individual can only be held morally responsible if their actions arise from their own will, not from external causes.

To reconcile scientific knowledge with the concepts of freedom and moral responsibility,

the idea of Compatibilism (also known as ‘soft determinism’) emerged. This concept holds that free will and determinism can coexist and are compatible. Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill are examples of those who support this view. Consequently, soft determinism posits that patterns of actions can be determined together in a manner that is still free, even if there is a fundamental disagreement in the patterns of actions, as they are still considered to be expressed freely (Lin, 2016).

Adler (2006) stated that TD is a concept that views technology as having a significant impact on human life, encapsulated in political rhetoric such as "the internet is revolutionizing the economy and society." This concept has a long history of controversy, particularly in the social sciences, where it is often applied to the study of organizations. Critics of this concept have raised important observations, noting that if technology is shaped by society, then technology and social structures evolve together through a process that is not newly determined. The impact of any technology, therefore, depends on how it is utilized.

With the spread of new technologies in modern capitalism, two major debates arise as follows: (1) Technology is determined by human intentions, either individually or

collectively, in the form of free will; and (2) The opposing view, which considers that the debate around TD continues to be renewed. A key element in TD relates to the idea of levels and technology, including their integration. Each form significantly challenges many other mainstream ideas. The first point is free will: Even if we set aside the deep philosophical aspects, social scientists must assess the extent of social change that can be attributed to something other than human intention, whether individually or collectively. The second point is that determinism stands in contrast to the structuralist view, which sees technology evolving together with social structures in an unpredictable manner. Finally, technology remains a subject of skepticism as an objective element within a framework of causal knowledge.

- Historical Evolution of Digital Technology

The debate on TD highlights differing perspectives on the impact of technology and the causes of these impacts. In assessing the effects of technology, the concept known as "Soft Technological Determinism" argues that technology is a significant force that helps social factors shape the form of technology. This contrasts with "Hard Technological Determinism," which views technology as the primary or dominant driver, with social influences having only a minimal effect on the nature of technology. Meanwhile, opponents of TD assert that technology is "neutral," and that most or all of its impacts stem from its function within a social context. In other words, this perspective emphasizes the social forces that shape the design and development of technology. Over time, technology and social scientists have focused on areas such as economics, culture, geography, biology, and language. The discussion of TD and its outcomes has primarily centered on technology as tools and devices. However, Adler (2007) argues that previously- processed raw materials should also be considered because highly intensive technology contains accumulated knowledge within these inventions, serving as principles of production organization. Typically, in Marx's concept, the skills of workers, components, and devices in industrial factories are not critiqued under a technological framework. In reality, however, if viewed through a technological lens, it is possible that differing impacts on labor arise from varying levels of technological decentralization and flexibility. This type of analysis has been supported by scholars, who have long recognized that TD influences changes in social and economic settings, such as the

shift from feudalism to capitalism, changes in occupations and the skill structure of the workforce in the 20th century, the emergence of post-World War II industries, and the second wave emergence of the "information society," "Post-Fordism," and globalization.

For some, technological advancements represent the gradual promise of human liberation from the burdens of illness and unnecessary labor. For others, this same path signifies a loss of our humanity, trapping us in complex networks of the internet and leading to alienation. However, the power of technology, as described in this way, is characteristic of a specific historical period.

Table 1: *The Development of Technology and the Nature of Phenomena*

Development (era)	Phenomena
Digital Foundation 1.0	This era marks the beginning of the "Internet Age," a time when people's activities and lifestyles shifted from offline to online. For example, sending mail by post has transitioned to sending emails, and the emergence of websites has made access to information easier and more widespread, with updates available 24/7. This change has had a significant and far-reaching impact, making activities more convenient and faster. Commercial activities and advertising have begun to take place through online tools, akin to having a storefront visible to everyone worldwide. During this period, Thailand focused on investing and building a foundation for developing a digital economy and society to reap future benefits, driving the master plan through urgent initiatives. Additionally, there were efforts to push forward a comprehensive legal framework and organizational reforms to advance the work.

Digital 2.0	Building on the 1.0 era, the next phase is characterized by consumers starting to create networks for communication in the online world. This 'Social Network' era began with chatting or messaging friends, associations, and small groups of people seeking convenience in communication. These small interactions began to develop and expand into business activities. Many entrepreneurs view Social Media as a powerful tool for connecting and building business networks with just a single click. It also aids in brand development, performance measurement, and brand image promotion. Social Media serves as a megaphone and platform for entrepreneurs to present their work to a global audience effectively. Additionally, social media tools can empower consumers by providing more options and visibility for products and services, thus influencing their decision-making process.

Development (era)	Phenomena
Digital 3.0	This era is characterized by the utilization of data flowing in and out nearly at the speed of light. The growth of Social Media and E-Commerce from the 2.0 era has led to an enormous expansion of data. Every platform, whether social media, web browsers, or businesses such as banking, logistics, insurance, and retail, handles vast amounts of data by the second, 24/7. This data is increasingly being used to the advantage of those who can mine it. As the saying goes, "He who has the most data, has the most power." Data is processed, analyzed, and interpreted to understand consumer needs and create products and services that meet customer demands. Every organization recognizes the importance of leveraging this so-called 'Big Data' to its fullest potential. However, to utilize Big Data in real- time, Cloud Computing is necessary to facilitate data manipulation, data storage, allocation of resources based on usage, and access to cloud data from anywhere. Users can access systems and data via the internet, manage and administer data, and share information with others (Shared Services). This reduces costs and complexity, allowing a focus on core tasks and increasing the speed of service and business operations at large.

Digital 4.0	This era is the stage where technology's “intelligence” allows devices to communicate and work autonomously. Technology from the first three eras can be likened to extensions of the human body—helping, facilitating, manipulating, calculating, and processing without having a brain. In the 4.0 Era, technology is developed to reduce the superfluous human role, and enhance human potential by pushing boundaries and fostering creativity to accelerate innovation. This era is referred to as ‘Machine-to-Machine’ (M2 M). For example, you can control household appliances via an application (app) without needing to physically press switches. Another real-world example is saying "capture" to a smartphone's camera app, which will automatically take a photo without you having to press the shutter. Advanced technologies, such as simulations for training employees, planning scenarios without needing to be physically present, or interactive learning tools, also characterize this era.

- TPMAP and Technology’s Role in Poverty Management

Poverty alleviation policy has garnered attention in response to political change, with one of the most critical issues being the identification of ‘poverty’ and ‘the impoverished’ which is challenging in itself. This difficulty arises because Thailand has a substantial informal labor sector.

People working in this sector often lack a formal employer or workplace, making it hard to verify their income. Additionally, there are many farmers and street vendors with irregular incomes. Whether these individuals are considered poor depends on when and how they are asked, which adds to the challenge. Consequently, poverty alleviation policies have struggled to succeed because they cannot accurately identify or locate the poor (Somchai Jitsuchon, 2017).

In the past, the government has continuously attempted to address these issues. Currently, a large dataset has been developed under the name TPMAP, or Thai People Map and Analytics Platform. This tool is believed to offer a sustainable solution to poverty by providing a "targeted poverty identification" system. TPMAP allows for the identification of poverty issues at various levels. (e.g.,individual/household/community/district/province/national), as well as specific poverty-related issues. This approach enhances the accuracy of targeting, and enables the design of policy interventions and projects that align with specific needs or conditions. It helps to

identify where the poor are located, what specific issues they face, and cross-verifies data from multiple sources.

Data obtained from TPMAP is used to analyze information about the poor from various sources, and can identify what issues "targeted poor individuals" face in each dimension based on the number of people in a ‘poor’ household. The dimensions indicate which basic needs indicators (JBP) are unmet. Each dimension can be used to calculate the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to quickly and clearly identify groups needing urgent assistance. The TPMAP system (data management) is thus a technology that facilitates the search for and belief in addressing poverty. The numbers and data reflect the fairness of poverty assistance, free from human bias, and represent a "new and integral part of the process of specific standardization." Data transferred to technological mechanisms acts as a decisive judgment. The functioning of algorithms serves as a ruling to determine who is selected and who is excluded from the system, compared to the past when written documents were submitted to officials who might have biases. Previously, citizens often complained that "officials filled out details incorrectly and provided wrong information." Nowadays, the common phrase heard is, "the system did not approve."

Amidst the wave of modernization and the state's efforts to replace old technologies with new ones, several painful costs have arisen. The newly developed technologies have led to the creation of new social thinking systems, organizing new forms of organizations and work groups, often without considering other dimensions. The attempt to define how technological mechanisms can address poverty by developing systems for accurate assessment and reducing bias in poverty judgment has, however, revealed a complexity in management for both users and beneficiaries. This observation aligns with Arthur's concept, further explained by David Harvey as a phenomenon where the evolution of technology creates itself from within, resulting in what is called "Combination Evolution." This concept describes how the evolution of any technology designed to solve specific problems, when implemented, generates opportunities to address smaller issues as part of solving larger problems. This process integrates problem-solving systems from existing larger frameworks with ongoing smaller problem-solving processes. When technological and political issues are integrated (e.g., welfare, inequality, poverty management, technological development), the result is a division between those who can seize resources and those who cannot.

In this era, adapting is crucial: It is not just about being born into poverty; it is also about being aware of and assessing one’s specific type of poverty, what one has, and what needs to

be done. Poverty is specific and not a general condition requiring aid. The Thai government's introduction of the "Poor Person's Card" reflects that poverty is a challenge of the times. Today's poor must have tools and resources that align with state mechanisms to survive, meaning they need to be proactive in order to manage. At the very least, they must be ready to access technological resources, including communication tools and devices that serve as intermediaries for accessing various forms of assistance. Access to information is another aspect that reflects the adaptability of the poor as recipients of aid. The government's allocation of the Poor Person's Card as direct assistance to those with specific conditions, without requiring repayment or participation in programs, highlights this.

We often see online pages flooded with questions like "When will the money come?" or

"Check my benefits urgently." On the surface, these might seem like common inquiries, but they reveal the intriguing role of the poor striving to access and claim their status of poverty. The proactive poor seek to be recognized as deserving and fair recipients of aid, hoping that such assistance will act as a ladder to lift them out of daily struggles and eventually become stronger and self-reliant. However, this vision is elusive. The reality often contrasts with the intentions of those in power, who may not want the image of poverty to be portrayed positively. As long as poverty and the poor remain critical political mechanisms and constituencies, the state and social powers, including experts, continue to depict the poor as passive and vulnerable, exacerbating technological inequalities.

The adaptation process for the poor today requires staying updated with access to these technological networks. As technological advancements continuously evolve, those who cannot keep up with these changes are increasingly left behind. The systems of sorting, verification, and data analysis through technology are designed to be accessible only to the state and experts, often overlooking dimensions of poverty and other living conditions. This tends to ignore other forms of inequality and reinforces the disparity in access to additional technological opportunities. The 'state welfare card' program has already highlighted these issues and might face similar problems with the 'digital wallet' assistance program. A significant concern is that such assistance methods may exacerbate the challenges for low-income individuals and fail to provide increased opportunities, reflecting a lack of structural readiness. Therefore, in today's world, those who cannot access or learn the system are the vulnerable members of society who are excluded from assistance programs, ultimately

becoming “both poor and lacking opportunity” due to their non-recognition by the system.

- Case Study: State Welfare Card

In the digital era, under the administration of Prime Minister Gen. Prayuth Chan-o-cha, the government introduced the State Welfare Card as a means to assist disadvantaged individuals. Prior to this, there were efforts to implement projects under a ‘digital economy’ framework, with the establishment of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society specifically overseeing these matters. The government has driven these efforts through the 20-Year National Strategy and the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan.

- Introduction to the Welfare Card Policy

According to the Royal Gazette, the 20-Year National Strategy, as stipulated in Article 65 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, mandates the state to establish a national strategy aimed at sustainable national development in accordance with the principles of good governance. This strategy is intended to serve as a framework for developing various plans to ensure coherence and integration, thus driving collective progress toward the established goals. The National Strategy Act of 2017, effective from August 1, 2017, established a committee responsible for drafting the national strategy, outlining procedures, and involving public participation in the strategy’s formulation, monitoring, and evaluation. The Act also includes measures to promote and support all sectors of society in aligning with the national strategy.

In accordance with the National Strategy Act of 2017, the National Strategy Committee has established six sub-committees to develop various aspects of the national strategy: Security, Enhancing Competitiveness, Human Resource Development and Enhancement, Creating Opportunities and Social Equality, Growth and Quality of Life with Environmental Sustainability, and Balancing and Developing Public Sector Management Systems.

These committees are responsible for drafting the national strategy according to the specified criteria, procedures, and conditions. They are also tasked with soliciting extensive public and governmental input to inform the drafting process, as required by law. The 20-Year National Strategy (2018-2037) is the first of its kind in Thailand, as stipulated by the Constitution. It aims to guide the country toward achieving the vision of “Thailand as a secure, prosperous, and sustainable developed nation through the philosophy of sufficiency economy”

within the designated timeframe. (King Prajadhipok's Institute, 2017)

When considering both the national ID card and the state welfare card, both serve as manifestations of state governance with the aim of controlling citizens. The national ID card reduces individuals to merely a system of images and data sets. On the other hand, the state welfare card is a manifestation of the national welfare policy provided by the state to those deemed poor, based on criteria established by the state. This reduces the complexity and fluidity of poverty as a personal condition to a defined category of poverty, with specific qualifications. This means that those who meet the criteria are considered 'poor' by entitlement, and must prove their poverty through the income system. This system reflects the state's belief that poverty is an issue requiring state intervention (Thon Pitidol, 2023).

Studies on the state welfare card from various perspectives have shown that proving 'poverty' has been a significant issue, as it is a core component of the program that leads to problems of exclusion and the inclusion of many who are not relevant. For example, the work of Decharut Sukkhum (2019) highlights that self-reporting poverty is the initial process for obtaining the state welfare card, but the state does not consider the impact and results on those proving their impoverished status. As an example, the poorest 20% of the population received only 40% of the welfare cards, while the remaining 60% were excluded. The exclusions were due to other criteria set by the government, such as owning more than 10 rai of land or having savings account deposits above a certain amount, which disqualified individuals from being considered 'poor.' In other words, about 2/3 of the poorest households did not receive the welfare card.

Furthermore, when considering the second poorest quintile of households with incomes greater than the first group but still categorized as 'low-income' by the National Economic and Social Development Board and international organizations (often referred to as the poorest 40% of the country), only 28% of members from this group received the state welfare card. State welfare systems often face two main challenges: (1) Exclusion, whereby those who should receive assistance do not; and (2) Leakage, whereby those who do not need assistance receive it. Considering the Thai registration data for the year 2017, those who should have received the card but did not ("exclusion error") prompted the Cabinet to approve principles and methods for additional registration under the "Thai Niyom Yongyut" project, specifically for disabled individuals, the elderly, bedridden patients, or those who could not travel to register.

The state welfare card thus represents a public policy reflecting a major management system with issues in its processes, from policy formulation to implementation and evaluation, especially in identifying the poor. This is due to various obstacles, such as the large informal sector, where workers often have no employers, making it difficult to verify their income. Additionally, professions like street vendor and farmer have uncertain incomes. Poverty is a dynamic issue, dependent on individual circumstances and timing, which complicates poverty alleviation policies. Since it is unclear who and where the poor are, the outcomes have consistently been unsuccessful.

The government has attempted to address these issues using data from sources like the National Statistical Office and the Ministry of Interior regarding basic needs of the population. While this data was believed to help identify the poor, practical application revealed problems. For instance, issues arose with reporting actual income, which could not be verified, and innovations like self-registration for the poor also faced problems. Individuals who registered were not always low-income, some did not report their actual income, and some with entitlement could not access their rights due to asset ownership restrictions. Despite the government's efforts to solve these issues using data from surveys by the National Statistical Office, such data is limited and difficult to use for identifying the poor effectively, covering less than 1% of the population. Similarly, while basic needs data from the Ministry of Interior was believed to help identify the poor, practical implementation encountered problems, particularly with people not reporting their actual income and the lack of methods to verify the accuracy (Somchai Jitsuchon, 2018).

- Structural and Operational Limitations

Analyzing the state welfare card within the framework of public policy cycles further highlights its limitations as an effective poverty alleviation tool. The approach to addressing low income needs to start from the root causes of the issue to ensure assistance meets the specific needs of individuals. The policy also reflects a top-down rational system approach, as responsibilities and tasks are formally assigned to different agencies. The target group, which consists of low-income individuals meeting the specified criteria, receives financial assistance through the card within a limited amount. The card holders must purchase goods or services at registered "Blue Flag" stores or other stores equipped with electronic payment systems approved by the government. Furthermore, the spending is restricted to designated consumer goods only.

However, clearly defining the responsibilities of each party has advantages in terms of coordination and collaboration between agencies according to procedural steps, ensuring that operations are aligned. Additionally, utilizing technology for database management (Big Data) of low-income individuals for future social welfare benefits is advantageous. However, setting conditions for spending through cards that can be used only for specific categories of goods or services, and designating locations for spending, may impact disparities in access to technology for cardholders. In terms of budget, comparing costs to outcomes, the cost-effectiveness of resources used in policy implementation in economic terms might stimulate the economy in the short-term through cash-usable subsidies. However, since the government does not plan and control the spending of the money received by the public, it leads to the majority of people not spending in line with the true objectives of the policy (Pattima Noikut, 2021).

Additionally, if the government must allocate the full amount of the budget earmarked for the welfare card, the cost will be no less than 20 billion baht per month. The standard of improving the quality of life based on the welfare card project requires increasing the card's amount by at least 13 billion baht per month, not including the costs of implementing the project and providing unconditional cash transfers. Evaluating the cost-effectiveness of these expenditures in terms of addressing poverty and improving the future quality of life for citizens is uncertain, which may make it an unwise investment in the long term (Pattima Noikut, 2021, p. 81). Another aspect of evaluating the political status of the policy is the acceptance of the policy by the public and stakeholders, through methods such as referendums, open comments, and using quantitative data to support decision-making in policy formulation. This process was not present from the start, with only polls or referendums conducted to gauge the satisfaction of policy recipients.

- Implementation Challenges

Regarding the implementation process, there are numerous issues with eligibility criteria not being met, and registration is not sufficiently accessible for low-income individuals in all areas, especially in rural areas or among the disadvantaged who have difficulty traveling to register. In terms of assessing policy impact using the Impact Assessment (IA) technique, it was found that, although the policy initially stimulated the economy in the short-term, the impact of using the welfare card may not be as significant as expected. This is because expenses

for consumer goods and travel are costs that everyone needs to spend regardless of having a welfare card. While the card might ease some financial burden, it may not significantly improve quality of life.

Despite criticism regarding the management system, particularly concerning the budget, the government has asserted that the state welfare card is a solution for addressing poverty and is an urgent measure. This is because low-income individuals face high living expenses relative to their income, making it crucial to implement measures to reduce the cost of living and improve the quality of life for this group. This rationale and need should result in significant impacts in two areas:

(1) Economic Impact: The card will increase the purchasing power of low-income individuals for goods and services towards the end of 2018, contributing to the growth of the national economy; and (2) Social Impact: Low-income individuals will receive assistance to alleviate necessary living expenses, including utility bills, end-of-year expenditures, medical and health care costs, and housing rent. This support is expected to improve the quality of life for this population (Ministry of Finance, 2018).

Similarly, the Deputy Spokesperson of the Prime Minister's Office (2023) pointed to a report on the cost-effectiveness of the Public Welfare Program which observed that the direct benefits include reducing the cost of living and necessary expenses for 13.26 million welfare cardholders. Cardholders in Bangkok benefit at a level of approximately 2,330 - 2,430 baht per person per month, while those in other provinces receive about 1,830-1,930 baht per person per month. The total value of the Public Welfare Program is just under 47 billion baht.

Indirect benefits include spending from the public fund on essential consumer goods and services totalling 43.3 billion baht, and stimulating the economy through private sector consumption of 75.3 billion baht. The cost-effectiveness of the Public Welfare Program shows that the benefits exceed the costs by 26.3 billion baht, due to reduced living expenses and relief of necessary costs for low-income individuals. This program also benefits the national economy, redistributes income to communities and the grassroots economy, and sustainably addresses poverty. The Thai welfare card program is a long-term policy that can continue with vocational training, enabling the poor to access financial resources for employment, supported by state financial institutions and agencies. It also addresses debt issues, particularly informal debt, which is a significant challenge for the country (Narumon Pinyo-sinwattana, 2023).

Another area of study focuses on the political implications of the state welfare card. It

has been noted that the Thai state welfare card is seen as a form of populism under the National Council for Peace and Order (PPTV, 2017), as it involves cash distribution similar to populist policies, leading some media outlets to label it as "addictive populism." Despite attempts to avoid populist terminology, the implementation of the program has been found to closely resemble populist policies (Sunan Srichandra, 2018). Decharut Sukkunakorn (2019) argues that what needs to be critically reviewed is the view of the welfare card as a populist policy, which reflects economic irrationality and benefits specific groups in exchange for political support. The card is part of a public welfare policy that emphasizes using power for the benefit of the people, focusing on long-term popularity rather than short-term appeal. In other words, it does not prioritize the democratic legitimacy of the power source, as long as the policy benefits the public (Narit Pissalabut, 2016).

There is also a network-based operational system, as seen in the study by Tosapol Chinchaoho and Watcharapol Phuttharaksa (2019) on "State Welfare Cards: Policy Network and Political Economy in Phitsanulok Province." The study found that the state welfare card program is directly linked to the concept of policy network structures through interactions within the welfare card project network, forming a "policy community" involving the public sector, private sector, and citizen sector. This network continuously exchanges benefits and operates under mutual dependence through eight significant elements, including groups with a closed network structure, where membership is limited to certain interest groups aligned with the welfare card program. These can be divided into two groups: (1) Members under the Blue Flag Public Welfare Program; and (2) Private companies participating in the project, which are regulated and overseen by the Department of Internal Trade to ensure they are producers and distributors of goods that are popular among consumers (Department of Internal Trade, 2018). Therefore, both large private companies and operators of Blue Flag Public Welfare Program stores are regulated by the Department of Internal Trade through similar qualification requirements.

In terms of continuity, the project is designed for the long-term to align with the 20-year National Strategic Plan, particularly under Strategy 4, which emphasizes the decentralization of economic, social, and technological development, reducing social disparities, and aligning with the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan. This plan focuses on creating fairness and reducing social inequality. The continuity under the leadership of Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-o-cha further reinforced the

stability and direction of the welfare card project2

This can be regarded as the main state welfare project of the reigning government aimed at addressing social inequalities. In terms of frequency of interaction, the policy emphasizes regular meetings among stakeholders within the project. This includes frequent interactions between the government and the public through quality-of-life development training, between the public and private sectors through purchasing from Blue Flag stores, and among the public in their daily lives.

- During his term as Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha. regarding common goals, there is an exchange relationship involving benefits, information, and other needs in return for roles within the policy structure. Negotiations are conducted to facilitate benefits for network members, including between stores and central government, between stores and local government, and between the public and government. In terms of benefits, the exchange of benefits between actors within the policy network aligns directly with the welfare card project, including the exchange of benefits between private companies and the government. Finally, cooperation is a key feature of the policy community model, where those in authority under the project can clearly control network members through policy requirements, rules, or agreements with government agencies, thus binding members to comply.

The central government plays a crucial role in controlling members within the policy network through regulations and rules, ensuring that all parties comply. Given these factors, the state welfare card program is a concrete example of a policy demonstrating the relationship as a political network, showing the exchange of benefits among various actors with significant interconnections. This results in interactions between actors being characterized by mutual benefit exchanges concerning resources held by each party within the policy implementation structure.

This situation highlights a critical issue of mutual benefit between the government and private companies participating in the program to provide goods to welfare cardholders. Similarly, the study by Thon Pitidul and Weerawat Patrasakhamkorn (2021) supports the view that the welfare card functions as a political network with significant implications. The use of the term "Public Welfare Project," which signifies collaboration, serves as a key starting point that engages various sectors at both policy and operational levels. This term has been integrated

into numerous development projects and political party names to align with public perception.

Thus, the welfare system remains tied to economic and political ideologies, with neoliberal ideas influencing changes in social welfare allocation. Emphasis is placed on personal responsibility, specificity, and reducing the role of the state, which is increasingly evident. Support for citizen equality is limited to the state acting as a problem solver, focusing policy on economic growth and budget efficiency. The effectiveness of financial management and adaptation to globalization are key conditions for welfare recipients that the state must consider (User fee).

Technical issues reflect the success of administrative efficiency only if the government can manage financial resources effectively.

- Conclusion

In sum, the current use of information technology as a primary driver has impacted social relationships and people in many dimensions. The advancement of productive forces, particularly information technology, involves using computers to collect, store, transfer, and analyze data, as well as utilizing big data for business decision-making and social policy interventions. This is an area that requires awareness, as the influence of capital, especially financial capital, infiltrates nearly all aspects of life.

This reflects the spread of financialization, which increasingly dictates and shapes the rules and conditions of citizens' lives. The state plays a crucial role in supporting various policies, particularly in the era of neoliberal capitalism, where its role has shifted from directly managing citizens' lives to setting trade and investment conditions that favor a free market system.

An interesting social outcome is the use of technology as a basis for managing citizens, which creates a distinct separation between "us" and "them" at the outset. According to McGuigan’s concept of "Generate itself," this reflects attitudes that reveal the infiltration of intriguing ideologies, particularly in creating a sense of citizenship regarding one's own development through language perception.

The rise of social media networks, which fosters interactions beyond mere communication according to Technology Determinism, also plays a role in shaping individual identity. This includes generating questions about various dimensions of life and oneself, contributing significantly to personal experience.

Thus, the state welfare card can be seen as a flawed attempt to address poverty by defining and creating a set of criteria to identify the poor. This approach may be misguided in a dynamic society influenced by constantly changing economic and political contexts within the global framework. At certain times, people become poorer due to systemic economic collapse, such as during the 1997 Asian financial crisis. With the advent of technology, poverty might also result from

limited access to rights and services or from disadvantages compared to those with greater technological opportunities.

Similarly, the state welfare card is implemented during a time when Thailand is increasingly adopting technology. Traditional poverty, tied to lifestyle and living conditions, represents an intrinsic cost of being poor. This situation worsens as the state and capital use these technologies to further control the poor, forcing them into a system of compliance and damaging their individuality. Poverty becomes normalized, with beneficiaries merely required to acknowledge and assess whether their poverty meets the criteria.

Moreover, the government tends to focus on reducing levels of statistical indicators of poverty, and employs measures that perpetuate poverty, creating new conditions -- particularly the proof of eligibility -- that technology cannot fully validate. Abstract aspects of poverty are evident, though some conditions should not require proof. Conversely, some situations clearly need assistance but are complicated by bureaucratic processes. This complexity needs careful consideration to ensure sustainable improvements in citizens' quality of life in the future.

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