

This is a study of social relationships among slum dwellers in a slum in Bangkok. In particular, it seeks to comprehend the underlying principles, reasons and rationale for social exchange with a special focus on social cooperation. Social relationship and social exchange which superficially appear to be amorphous, chaotic and lacking in structures and principles, are in fact imbued with a set of meanings and reasons which the analyses in this study attempt to explain.

Using social exchange theory and network analysis to analyze data collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews and examples from everyday life of informants, the study categorizes the various forms of exchange among the slum dwellers which are based on different reasons : economic, social and interest aggrandizement. Not surprisingly, personal interest is the core for social behavior.

In the above context, social cooperation, or the lack of it, becomes intelligible. Similarly, strategies employed by the slum dwellers to further their position in social exchange with regards to allocation of benefits and resources and with regards to preservation and enhancement of their protective shields become clear and understandable.