

A Participatory Development Strategy for Sugar Palm Plantation Community

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Abstract The objectives were 1) to create the development strategy for sugar palm plantation community, and 2) to experiment the development strategy for sugar palm plantation community in Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province. Qualitative research and quantitative research approaches were used. The experiment group composed of 50 peoples that were divided into 10 peoples for each group and they were local scholars or knowledgeable peoples in the sugar palm, sugar palm owner, sugar palm producers, suppliers of sugar palm product, community leaders and local leaders. Data collection and analysis were done with document, In-Depth interview, focus group discussion, observation and participatory action research. The analysis revealed that the important problem solving were the sugar palm plantation community at Keoychai District lacks of adaptation to suit with the prosperous period. The results of testing of system operation with the experimental group who were stakeholders, it was found that Unit 5: To establish a center of strategic development with the satisfaction of stakeholders at the highest level of 4.54 and satisfaction of stakeholders with strategy development of overall average at the highest level of 4.51. The satisfaction of 60 visitors who came to visit, receive service and purchase the sugar palm product, the strategy of "watching, tasting, shopping, and taking photograph" by setting 4 sites for the visitors, it was found that shopping site with the satisfaction of visitors at the high level of 4.06 and overall average satisfaction of visitors at the high level of 3.97.

Key Words: Participatory Development Strategy, Sugar Palm Plantation Community, Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province

1. Introduction

With inheriting for long time ago, Thai society is an agricultural society that agricultural way is a fundamental living since primeval time. This has created culture and wisdom of agricultural identity including way of life and behavior blueprint that connected to characteristics of land use by using learning experience in natural occurrences. Moreover, Thai people has inspired thinking and developing his life way by taking these advantages based on equipments, tools, and processes in order to meet the highest quality of life. Therefore, the quality of life would depend on traditional, cultural, familiar and consumption behavior and belief of local community as well. Most of foods have been locally produced through direct learning experiences with gradually proceed. Particularly, sugar production from palm tree, it is also local wisdom. Even though, currently, Thai society has dramatically transformed from prior in various parts, but sugar production from palm tree still stays with Thai society because sugar is a basic element of Thai food because sugar has value of nutrient for energy for vital life (Rojanapitakkul, L.2007).

Regarding to economic, politic and social revolutionizes, Thai society has significantly changed, therefore, majority people in society couldn't adapt to keep up with it. This caused the cultural problem to solve continuously, since prior Thai society was agricultural society and lived in rural area, so they were farming and culturing as a main living. Prior production was emphasized on serving for family consumption without considering on mass production for exporting (Veeraprajuk, K, and Boonsue, K, 1997).

In the age before 1961, Thailand was faced with the poverty and lack of basic structure and service, therefore the first national plan (1961-1966) was established to aim for rapid growth in economy by economic development through expressly developing industry and promoting in private sector investment including pay attention to infra-structure development to support this speedy development such as transportation, energy production and irrigation development in order to promote better life quality of Thai people (The National Economic Development Board Office of the Prime Minister., 1961). During the period of the second nation plan (1967-1971) and the fifth national plan (1982-1986), the occurred different events had impacted to the development. Such as monetary crisis and international trade, the exported income of Thailand were radically decreased therefore, it effected to the economic growth because of value of agricultural and industrial products were lower than the setting target (The National Economic Development Board Office of the Prime Minister., 1967, 1972, 1977, and 1982). The problem of income distribution and extending poverty were increasingly. The seventh nation plan (1992-1996), emphasized on economic extension, and completion for building the income security, it made Thai society to become materialism and caused behavior problem of people to neglect the morals, ethics, disciplines, and selfish. These are affected to original way of life and good value fading from Thai society and harmonizing of collapses of institutes of family, community and local culture. This plan adjusted the agricultural structure to raise income of agricultural income to be able to self-reliance (The National Economic Development Board Office of the Prime Minister., 1992). The past period, Thai government stressed on mechanism of belief by giving package of growth to Thai citizen, therefore Thailand became one of different countries with fast economic growth according the Westernization pattern. However, the problem of poverty of major citizen and justice income distribution could not be solved so it made Thai neglected Thai wisdom based on cultural concept. Consequently, during the eighth to tenth national plan (1997-2011), government has turned to aim for human development as main target by defining policy on Thai wisdom subjectively and has promoted living in keeping with principle of Self-sufficiency Economy by stressing on community participation and community learning. It is a good opportunity to rehabilitate community potency by using recourses, wisdoms and cultures to be social capital and power to create strong society (Sotthipuntu, P. et al., 2004, and The National Economic Development Board Office of the Prime Minister, 1997, 2002, and 2007).

It is obviously seen that model of country development, Thai government aimed to economic growth more than the aim to encourage the community competency adaptation by themselves. Hence the global situation faced with numerous crises, Thailand also faced crisis like as others countries in global society. It is obviously seen impact that community cannot self-dependent because of neglect of local wisdom. Those impacts make society to subjectively alert, they turned back to the development mean of stress on community base. The Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550, set 5 on Basic policy of government, has promoted and supported development of local wisdom and Thai wisdom to use for good production, service, and earn a living including promoting earn of living or invention to create new knowledge, to maintain and to develop local wisdom and Thai wisdom by setting policy of people participation in section 87 with aim of people participation in policy formulating, decision making of economic, social and political plan. Section 85, it promotes people participation in preservation, conservation and maintenance to use natural resources and biodiversity balancing until it becomes national fundament for wisdom transferring succeeding for community strength establishment. It is acceptable that strong community must be self-dependent through learning ability together in community activities by depending on some important fund existing in community such as social capital, resource capital and cultural capital (Sotthipuntu, P. et al., 2004).

Local culture of each place has the similar and different practices in accordance with the contexts of community such as weather, geographical characteristics, attitude, belief, and way of living. Such as agricultural community or fishing community, this makes a different of local culture. Moreover, it also relies on accepting for other civilization and prosperity to integrate among cultures. Even though, the threat of foreign culture, it might cause some local culture disappeared but there are a lot of cultures still remain. In order to maintain original culture, it needs to preserve and improve or develop that culture to be in consistent with modernized age appropriately and effectively. Local culture reflects not only the prosperity but also like a teacher to aid human to better understand the life situation because it is congruent to way of life, thinking, feeling, attitude, belief, and disciplines. Thus, peoples in community should be known and learnt their own culture to understand life and preserve worth and build their prides to disseminate to other society. Meanwhile, it must be developed more prosperity and incessantly transferred. Way of practice and living of community people, there are both

alike and dissimilar in each locality. The difference of each locality was named as "identity" or "uniqueness" (Office of National Culture Commission., 2011).

In Thailand, There various sugar production from different kind of trees such as sugar cane, coconut and sugar palm (Rojanapitakkul, L.2007). The historical evidence confirmed that sugar palm originated on the earth for million years, therefore, it can be accounted that it is a plant in primitive age and it was assumed to have origin in tropical zone of Africa. Afterward, it was spread to South India and countries in Asia region such as Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. Thai believes that sugar palm in Thailand has origin from India. The assumption is high possibility since site of sugar palm cultivation in the past was found at important port city that contacted with India before such as Supanburi (U-thong District), Chainath (Sankaburi District) Nakhon Srithammarach, Songkla, Nakhon Pathom (Nakhonchaisri District) (Ruchsameethamwong, P., 1994).

For that reason, Thai people have known the sugar palm since their ancestors. In local area, sugar palm has cultivated generally and some is natural growth. It is important for community development in term of making different livelihood through buying and selling. Additionally, sharing and exchanging resources, it builds systemically income and connects to strengthen community through concept of community economy based on local wisdom (Sotthipuntu, P. et al., 2004).

Community in Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province, is a sugar palm production community. Primary survey was done by interviewing and focus group discussion. In the past sugar palm tree generally grew covering whole subdistrict but presently, 6 villages are left (total 17 villages). Main occupation of people are rice farmer and together with sugar palm producer. The survey was done in 2007 with number of sugar palm producers and number of sugar palm trees; it was found that the number of trees are decreased from 2002 about 10,000 trees (Keoychai Subdistrict Development Plan, 2007). Currently there are 80 households with 5,000 palm trees and it is expected to almost immediately dissolve. The sugar palm is important to Keoychai Subdistrict people because it is property transferring from their ancestors since ancient age. It is also accounted as symbol of Keoychai Subdistrict community that way of live ties up with benefit use of sugar palm product for long time until it becomes a culture and living by transforming for daily life use. But with the globalization threat, it invades in community, sugar palm earn living people have declined because they neglects of its value in term of economic capital in accordance with lack of knowledge transferor. However, there is some people earning from sugar palm production and government agency and local administration organization also realizes on conservation and promotion for this livelihood. Therefore, community needs to build development strategy to solve this problem through participatory action research.

2. Objective

The research objectives were as followings:

- 1) To create the development strategy for sugar palm plantation community in Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province.
- 2) To experiment the development strategy for sugar palm plantation community in Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province.

3. Methodology

The research design was implemented in steps by step as followings:

1. The qualitative research was used for creating the development strategy for sugar palm plantation community in Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province. Focus Group discussion and In-Depth Interview were used for data collection. There were 5 steps of strategy development including;
 - 1.1 Identifying and analyzing the way of life of sugar palm planter.
 - 1.2 Defining and analyzing target problems.
 - 1.3 Defining the target of strategy
 - 1.4 Creating units of system operation
 - 1.5 Providing resources
2. The quantitative research was used for experimenting the strategies for Development of sugar palm plantation community in Keoychai Subdistrict, Chumseang District, Nakhon Sawan Province. There were 2 sample groups of experiment. The first experiment group composed of 50 peoples that were stakeholders of 10 peoples for each group of local scholars or knowledgeable peoples on sugar palm, sugar palm owners, sugar palm

producers, suppliers of sugar palm product, community leaders and local leaders. The second experiment group was 60 visitors.

3. Results

The study of problem sugar palm plantation community at Keoychai Subdistrict, it was found that the problem of community at Keoychai Subdistrict due to loss of identity of the sugar palm, and the analysis revealed that the important problem solving were the sugar palm plantation community at Keoychai Subdistrict lacks of adaptation to suit with the prosperous period. There was a structural element composing of 1) the lack of sugar palm identity, 2) regardless of security of production, 3) the lack of a complete business cycle of group unity, 4) the lack of continuity of tradition and cultural transferring, and 5) the lack of a strategic driving for sugar palm development.

Therefore, the development strategic goals were the development for sugar palm plantation community at Keoychai Subdistrict through participation for achieving the above strategy, therefore the strategy defined for maintaining the identity of the community at Keoychai Subdistrict included five units of system operation that Unit 1 was to build a unique landscape of the community, Unit 2 was to build standards and hygiene product, Unit 3 was to organize complete business cycle, Unit 4 was to hold the annual tradition on sugar palm and Unit 5 was to establish a center of strategic development.

The results of testing of system operation with the experimental group of 50 stakeholders, it was found that Unit 5: To establish a center of strategic development with the satisfaction of stakeholders at the highest level of 4.54 and satisfaction of stakeholders with strategy development of overall average at the highest level of 4.51.

Table 1 Stakeholder Satisfaction of Operation along with Development Strategy for sugar palm plantation community at Keoychai Subdistrict

No.	Items	Satisfaction Level		
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
Unit 1: To build a unique landscape of the community		4.51	0.27	Highest
1.1	Concept for building a unique landscape of the community	4.40	0.49	High
1.2	Appropriateness for building a unique landscape of the community	4.54	0.50	Highest
1.3	Benefit receiving from operation according to this unit	4.44	0.50	High
1.4	Successful level of this unit operation	4.56	0.50	Highest
1.5	Accepted to live along with this unit	4.62	0.49	Highest

Table 1 Continue

No.	Items	Satisfaction Level		
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
Unit 2: To build standards and hygiene product		4.52	0.24	Highest
2.1	Concept for building standards and hygiene product	4.66	0.48	Highest
2.2	Appropriateness for building standards and hygiene product	4.54	0.50	Highest
2.3	Benefit receiving from operation according to this unit	4.56	0.50	Highest
2.4	Successful level of this unit operation	4.32	0.47	High
2.5	Accepted to live along with this unit	4.52	0.50	Highest
Unit 2: To organize complete business cycle		4.51	0.23	Highest
3.1	Concept for organizing complete business cycle	4.54	0.50	Highest
3.2	Appropriateness for organizing complete business cycle	4.40	0.49	High
3.3	Benefit receiving from operation according to this unit	4.44	0.50	High
3.4	Successful level of this unit operation	4.72	0.45	Highest
3.5	Accepted to live in accordance with this unit	4.44	0.50	High
Unit 4: To hold the annual tradition on sugar palm		4.48	0.23	High
4.1	Concept for holding the annual tradition on sugar palm	4.46	0.50	High
4.2	Appropriateness for holding the annual tradition on sugar palm	4.46	0.50	High
4.3	Benefit receiving from operation according to this unit	4.40	0.49	High
4.4	Successful level of this unit operation	4.48	0.50	High
4.5	Accepted to live along this unit	4.58	0.50	Highest

No.	Items	Satisfaction Level		
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
Unit 5: To establish a center of strategic development		4.54	0.24	Highest
5.1	Concept for establishing a center of strategic development	4.56	0.50	Highest
5.2	Appropriateness for establishing a center of strategic development	4.56	0.50	Highest
5.3	Benefit receiving from operation according to this unit	4.54	0.50	Highest
5.4	Successful level of this unit operation	4.70	0.46	Highest
5.5	Accepted to live along with this unit	4.54	0.50	Highest
Overall Satisfaction of Stakeholders		4.51	0.26	Highest

The experimental strategy creation were found that 1) the site of watching, tasting shopping and taking photograph as a result of the target problem solving of sugar palm identity. The site of watching was to illustrate on Keoychai Subdistrict unique as site of sugar palm product display. The site of tasting was to build confidence in the safety of production process of sugar palm. The site of shopping was to represent a complete business cycle of group unity. The site of taking photograph was to reflect continuity of tradition and cultural transferring in order to stay with Keoychai Subdistrict forever, 2) the General Hospital Products (GHP) standards used in the manufacturing process of the sugar palm product to build the consumer confidence in the product, 3) group unity of the community to create a common vision and ideology, 4) the festival and tradition of group participation and the strategy were filled in plan and budget provisions of Subdistrict Organization Administration of Keoychai Subdistrict, and 5) the center for strategic development with participation of all sectors, strategy was used to drive the development of sugar palm community at Keoychai Subdistrict.

The satisfaction of 60 visitors who came to visit, receive service and purchase the sugar palm product, the strategy of "watching, tasting, shopping, and taking photograph" by setting 4 sites for the visitors, it was found that the shopping site with the satisfaction of visitors at the high level of 4.06 and overall average satisfaction of visitors at the high level of 3.97.

Table 2 Visitor Satisfaction of Strategy of Watching, Tasting, Shopping, and Taking Photograph at Keoychai Subdistrict

No.	Items	Satisfaction Level		
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1.	Watching site	3.95	0.36	High
	Concept used for building a unique landscape of the community	4.00	0.82	High
	Appropriateness for establishing a center of strategic development	3.75	0.77	High
	Interesting for presentation of watching site	3.92	0.83	High
	Benefit receiving from watching site	3.97	0.82	High
	Appreciation from watching site	4.10	0.79	High

Table 2 Continue

No.	Items	Satisfaction Level		
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
2.	Tasting site	3.99	0.31	High
	Concept used for demonstrating the original production process	3.90	0.73	High
	Preparation of place and product sample for tasting/reception	4.02	0.79	High
	Interesting for presentation of watching site	4.02	0.79	High
	Benefit receiving from watching site	4.07	0.78	High
	Appreciation from watching site	3.93	0.77	High
3.	Shopping site	4.06	0.39	High
	Concept used for decorating at front of shop	3.97	0.84	High
	Appropriateness of product display in shop	3.95	0.72	High
	Accountability of product hygiene	4.18	0.79	High
	Benefit receiving from demonstration of GHP production process	4.10	0.71	High
	Appreciation from shopping sugar palm product	4.08	0.79	High
4.	Taking photograph site	3.87	0.37	High
	Concept used for decorating of this site	3.87	0.87	High
	Appropriateness for decorating of this site	3.98	0.83	High
	Interesting for decorating of this site	3.80	0.84	High

No.	Items	Satisfaction Level		
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
	Benefit receiving from this site	3.78	0.85	High
	Appreciation from this site	3.92	0.79	High
	Overall Satisfaction of Visitors	3.97	0.17	High

4. Discussion

Research results revealed that the most significance for community development is people participation. Another importance of community development is development strategy created and developed by stakeholders who really understand and share benefit from the development. Therefore after developing strategy, it needs to be experimented by implementing in the real situation and determining the stakeholders satisfaction and customer satisfaction of sugar palm product. Moreover, it needs a driving agent to be a main host to take major responsibility and it should establish a center of strategic development for sugar palm product development. Moreover, regarding to the visitors satisfaction with the strategy of watching, tasting, shopping, and taking photograph to attract the visitors and make appreciation of product.

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