

Social Capital and Strengthening of Klong Arang Community, Sakeaw Province, Thailand

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Abstract

This research purposes to study social capital of Klong Arang Community, and the factors that help strengthening Ban Klong Arang, Moo 16, Ban Gang Sub-district, Muang Sakeaw District, Sakeaw Province. It was conducted by using the qualitative research method which involves the collection of observation, in-depth interview from 15 informants who are related to Klong Arang Community, analyzing of the contents, and finally, synthesizing them to fulfill the objectives of the research. The result shows that Kong Arang Community comprise of the following kinds of social capital: 1) human capital, namely the headman of Ban Klong Arang, and the community committee, who are the important driving force in developing the community, 2) natural resources capital, namely natural forest and the community's forest, 3) knowledge and cultural capital, namely knowledge on herbal medication, and important traditions and 4) institutional capital, namely the groups that are important to the community. The factors that cause the community to have strength are: (1) the community leaders being strong and knowledgeable, (2) the people in the community having the kinship-like relationship, respecting and caring for one another, (3) people in the community participating with the community, (4) management of the community in a compromising way, and giving opportunities to the people in the community to participate with the community, and (5) imposing rules for co-living within the community. These factors are important in making social capital valuable to the community, as well as able to strengthen Klong Arang Community.

Keywords: Social Capital, Strengthen Community, Klong Arang Community

Introduction

Social capital is the relationship among persons, based upon trust towards one another. It includes reciprocal support, caring for one another, unity towards one another, and such relationship must conform with the ethics and the good moral endorsed by the society. It creates the relationship system which binds through the form of kinship. Within the community, they share the same beliefs and cultures inherited from the past and conveyed through family and community members. This creates knowledge exchange as well as reciprocal dependency among the people within the community. It is considered a social mechanism formed by the relationship between a person to another, a person to the nature, a person to beliefs (Romrattanapan, 2005: 73).

In the development of Thailand in the past, the country's development policies were employed in accordance with the National Economic and Social Development Plan. The development of the economy was emphasized. This causes Thailand to have higher development in material aspect. But the Thai society turns out to be affected, and many problems arose. The good culture, way of life, and the simplicity of the Thai society began to

change along with the decadence of the natural resources and the insecurity of the family, community, and society. The development that challenges the survival of the economy and the social security of Thailand in the future is the human resources development. This means to develop the quality and the capability of Thai people to create creativity, which will enhance the potentials of the community, the society, and ultimately, the nation (Chantrakat, 2000). Under such circumstance, the concept that is being more popular is the concept of social capital. After Thailand Economic Crisis of 1997, the government has created projects for social investment which received support from academics and loans from the Work Bank to tackle the economic crisis and to strengthen communities, while upholding the development principle that focused on social capital as an important factor of developing and strengthening the community (Suksridakul, 2009: 1).

However, strengthening of the community, governing of the society by basing upon helping and caring for one another, and developing the community in parallel and as a whole, including economic, social, cultural, governing, and environmental resources aspects will all be related. It will create sustainable and firm development. These things require social capital which exists in each community. This social capital is the force that will drive all the communities to be able to add more value and social capital to their own community, to be able to catch up on the problems, and to be able to handle problem better. Eventually, they will become self-reliable in the long run.

According to its importance described above, this research, therefore, studied on social capital that exists in the community by studying within the area of Klong Arang Community, Moo 16, Ban Gang Sub-district, Muang Sakeaw District, Sakeaw Province. It is the community whose leaders are strong and enthusiastic in making their own community self-reliable, having well organized management, as well as having participation from the people in the community. As a result, it was recognized and admired as a sufficiency economy, happy, and excellent village in the provincial level of Sakeaw Province. This community also hosts various Community Working Groups who make constant study trip to it to inspect the development of the community. For this reason, the researcher was interested in studying about Klong Arang Community, Moo 16, in the subject of social capital of the community, in order to learn about all aspects of the social capital which lies in the community about how it affects strengthening of the community, as well as to study the factors that support and obstruct social capital within the strengthened community which shaped Klong Arang Community to become the learning center that opens for other communities to learn from, and becoming well known as of today.

Research Objectives

This research has the following objectives: 1) to study the social capital of Klong Arang Community, Moo 16, Ban Gang Sub-district, Muang Sakeaw District, Sakeaw Province, 2) to study the factors that supports and obstructs the social capital that help strengthening Klong Arang Community, Moo 16, Ban Gang Sub-district, Muang Sakeaw District, Sakeaw Province.

Research Method

This is mainly a quantitative research, both in the process and the method under the in-depth interview with 15 key informants comprising of 1) the community leaders, namely the village headman, and the community committee of 5 2) the community members of 7, and 3) officials and academics of 3 who have worked related to the area.

The researcher has analyzed the information while collecting data in accordance with the qualitative research method. The data are collected from in-depth interview, unofficial

interview, participant observation, and analyzing of the content to connect and conform with the context of the community, along with the collection of related thoughts, theories, and findings by reviewing literatures to get the findings that match with the objectives. It has the following topics of study: 1) natural resources capital 2) human capital, 3) knowledge and cultural capital, and 4) institutional capital.

Results

According to the data collected from the in-depth interview with 15 key-informants who are related to Klong Arang Community, Moo 16, Ban Gang Sub-district, Muang Sakeaw District, Sakeaw Province, on social capital of Klong Arang Community and the factors that support and obstruct the strengthening of Klong Arang Community, the findings are detailed as follows:

The context of Klong Arang Community

Kong Arang Community, Moo 16, is a community that was recently established in 2005 by separating itself from the village of Saeng Chan, Moo 13, Ban Gang Sub-district, Muang District, Prachin Buri Province. It comprises of 151 household, 253 male citizen, and 266 female citizen (Village Development Plan of 2017-2019). Ban Klong Arang is also divided into 2 areas, namely, Klong Arang area, and Na Lom area. According to the history of settlement of the community, the area used to be jungle area and located in Prachin Buri Province. Later, it was re-demarcated which resulted in the area being part of Sakeaw Province. The people in the area are much more familiar and closely connected with Ban Na Sub-district, Kabin Buri District, Prachin Buri Province. The community is located near a forest park. According to the folklore of Klong Arang, there used to exist yellow flame trees ("Arang" tree) on the canal sides which later become the name of the community. Today, there are people living here because of the deforestation which gave them the farmlands. The community, therefore, is closely connected to the forest. Most people in the community are farmers. People in the community always cooperate in all activities. They set up occupation group to create side-line jobs for themselves. Kong Arang Community is a well-organized community that supports participation of its people. It is recognized and admired as a sufficiency economy, happy, and excellent village in the provincial level of Sakeaw Province.

Social capital in Klong Arang Community

The researcher has studied the social capital of Klong Arang Community, the findings are as follows:

(1) Human capital: Human capital is considered a valuable and important kind of social capital which causes the community development. Having human capital as a social capital in a community will help such community to have efficient, firm, and sustainable development. The people in Klong Arang Community live in harmony as brothers and sisters. They have the kinship-like relationship. Their community leaders are, namely, Mr. Pattana Prompao, the village headman who was selected by the people in the community, and the community committee whose role is to carry out the community development activities. These people have leadership. They have knowledge, capability, and strong will to develop the community, as well as the public-service minds. The community committee is the important driving force in developing of the community. They made Klong Arang Community to be recognized. This resulted in having the government and private agencies' constant support on the participation of the community's activities.

(2) Natural resources capital: Natural resources capital is the kind of capital that the community has made use of from all the resources that exist in the community. Kong Arang Community has forest resources, namely, the natural forest, and the community's forest. Most of the people in the community have benefited from the natural forest in collecting

herbs, and benefited from the community's forest in the farmlands allocation which is used in growing herbs, vegetable, and as the public water source of the community.

(3) Knowledge and cultural capital: Ban Klong Arang Community has the knowledge and the culture that valued beliefs and the local tradition, namely, knowledge on herbal medication. The important tradition is the Hae Prasat Peung (the wax-crafted castle parade) and the Boon Klang Baan ceremony which are the heart and mind of the people in the community, and helps creating unity through such important traditional activities of the community.

(4) Institutional capital: The people in community who share faith, trust, and common conscious mind, they aim for the same thing, which is to develop the society and the community to be strong. This is the process of forming social groups and institutions that are powerful networks in driving the community development. It brings efficiency and power for them to help one another or to make benefit for the community. These groups/institutional/organizational capitals in Klong Arang Community are the integration of relatives and close neighbors in order to help one another and earn benefit from such integration. There are 4 prominent groups, namely, occupational group, efficiency economy group, home-stay business group, and youth group.

Factors that support the social capital of Klong Arang Community

The research found that the factors that support the social capital of Klong Arang Community are as follows:

(1) The community leaders are strong and have high level of leadership: The leaders of Klong Arang Community, namely, the headman of the village, the assistant headman, and the community committee, have high level of leadership. Especially, the headman, Mr. Pattana Prompao, is acceptable and reliable to the villagers. This results in good cooperation and participation of the people, as can be seen from the cooperation from children network group, senior citizen group, and the villagers, in doing all activities, creating activities that develop the community, and making the community strong and well known. As a result, they receive government and private agencies' constant support on the participation of the community's activities.

(2) The people in the community have kinship-like relationship: The people in Klong Arang Community have high level of trust towards one another. They have kinship-like relationship. They also have high level of public responsibility. They make use of public areas such as community's forest and public water pool for agriculture. They respect, care for, and kind to one another. There is no dispute or disagreement in the community.

(3) Participation of the people in the community: The people in the community participate with the community. They take part in thinking, planning, and implementing all activities of the community in all process. They also have high level of public responsibility.

(4) The community management process: Klong Arang Community has compromising way of management. Participation is open to the people in the community. They also have meetings in order to allocate works and activities according to each person's skill. Whenever some of the members go for training, they will also share the knowledge received to the others afterward, via their community meetings or the community's voice announcement.

(5) Imposing of the rules on co-living of the community, both in written document called the Community's Health Charter, and non-written in the village's monthly meeting, or any other activity's meeting.

The findings of the social capital's obstacles

The findings of the social capital's obstacles are as follows:

(1) Lack of successors of the community's leader after the headman Pattana Prompao. This may lead to disputes, community's internal political problem, and division among the people.

(2) Government agencies' projects and activities which are introduced into Klong Arang Community are temporary in nature. They have no continuity and sustainability.

Conclusion

The findings of the research on social capital and the strengthening of Klong Arang Community has found that, social capital is highly important to strengthening of the community. Social capital exists in every community, but it depends that whether or not a community will see the value of its social capital and make use of it in developing the community towards sustainable strength and self-reliance. Klong Arang Community has made use of its social capital to develop itself for better living, unity, becoming the role model community, and being recognized in Sakeaw Province and in other provinces. The kinds of social capital of Klong Arang Community that causes the community to have strength are as follows:

1. Human capital. A strong community usually has persons who are potential and capable of taking care of, and manage the community. They are the backbone of developing the community towards strength and security. Other than that, the people in the community are also enthusiastic, generous, and volunteer-minded for public works. This conforms with the findings of Chonlada Boonyoo (2013: 63) which found that a community having human capital including leaders who are volunteering-minded, knowledgeable, and responsible, and the people in the community who have affection towards their home community and unity, will help the community to be sustainably developed, and becoming a strong community.
2. Natural resources capital. When the people in the community get to make use of, or rely on the natural resources capital within the community, it makes the community binds with, love, and care for the natural resources of the community. It will also create the need to preserve and keep it for later use of the community. This conforms with Nawakan Tangtong (2011) which found that, the natural resources capital of the community consist of the abundance of soil, water, climate, and minerals, which is the basic factors that supports the living of the people in the community.
3. Knowledge and cultural capital. It is an important kind of capital which creates bonds, unity, and assistance between one another in the community. It is the co-creation of the people in the community. It strengthens the community. This conforms with the findings of Pisak Kalyanamitra (2018: 318) which found that, culture is what binds the people in the society with their own roots, and to cherish, to be proud to keep and preserve, to rehabilitate, and to add value, for the benefit of themselves, their family, community, and the country.
4. Institutional capital. It is the creation of community's social relationship, forming of organizations and networks within the community, forming of occupational group, sufficiency economy group, home-stay business group, and youth group, to tackle problems within the community. It will strengthen the community. This conforms with the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (2014: 3-4) which says that, the institutional capital is an integration of groups of people as an organization full of faith, trust, common conscious mind, and common will, to develop and strengthen the community. It is forming social groups and institutions as powerful networks to drive the community development. This solidarity creates the capability and the power in helping one another or making benefit for the community together.

Regarding the factors that support strengthening Klong Arang Community, it is found that Klong Arang Community has strong, knowledgeable, and capable leaders. The people in the community trust, believe in, and cooperate with them in doing community's activities. The people in the community take parts in the community's activities. The people have volunteering-mind and enthusiastic in developing the community and the livings, and the community management. This conforms with the thoughts of Kanchanit Woranaipinit (2011: 8) which defines the strength of the community as an integration within the community by learning together to cause changes and development within the community. It is also being able to decide to tackle the problems and manage the development with the power of the

people in the community. This requires effective management of the social capital that exists in the community, as well as the participation of the people in the community in the implementation process, including the supports of one another, sustainable self-reliance, and reliance on one another within the community. This also conforms with the thoughts of Pravet Wasee (1998: 26) that defines the term social capital that, having solidarity, good education, culture, honesty, public responsibility, work efficiency, and good politics and civil service system, are the foundation of good economy. Social capital has close meaning to the term strong society. Social capital is greatly important and should be nourished and strengthen. It is the foundation of good economy, politics, and moral. When the society is strong, social capital will also be the foundation of other developments.

Suggestions

1. Guideline suggestions for the use of social capital to create strength for the community are as follows:

- 1) The people in the community must recognize and understand the value of social capital that exist within the community, and make use of the social capital to create benefit for the community. There are many aspects of social capital that lies in community and society. Everyone in the community must be aware of the value of the social capital in all aspects, whether human capital, natural resources capital, knowledge and cultural capital, and institutional capital.
- 2) The community must maintain social capital within its community by arranging activities that has variety and continuity. This will create connectivity, support, trust, bonds, and strength of social network, because it will be the tool to facilitate successful teamwork of the people in the society.
- 3) The community should provide a platform for brainstorming and knowledge exchange, so its members have chances to meet up and discuss, as well as to elect or decide what the community can do best. This is to focus on developing certain thing, instead of carrying out every activities introduced to the community.

2. Suggestion for problem tackling

- 1) The continuity of leadership and the leaders' succession may lead to disputes, internal politics, and division within the community. On the youth's side, it has good succession. But for the village leader, the headman, there still exist concerned problems. The current solution is giving chances to everyone to present his ability, express opinions, show leadership, monitor one another, and look for new generation leaders, as well as help creating leaders by using the respectable headman as the role model.
- 2) The government agencies' project activities that are introduced to Klong Arang Community are temporary in nature. They do not have continuity and sustainability. This can be solved by coordinating with the network groups or organizations that have good relationship with the community, who are ready to assist the community by being advisors regarding implementation of activities that the community is interested and can do the best, as well as to develop such activities to become prominent and become the community's specialization.

Suggestion for research

To make this beneficial to the next research, the researcher would like to suggest the following interesting subjects:

1. Study on the management of social capital of the communities that are facing the dynamic of social changes.
2. The awareness of social capital within Kong Arang Community.

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