

นวัตกรรมสังคมและการพัฒนาชุมชน: ตัวแบบการขับเคลื่อนโดยภาคประชาสังคม จากกรณีศึกษากองเก่า จังหวัดแพร่

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ศึกษารูปแบบของนวัตกรรมทางสังคมที่ปรากฏผ่านการคืนชีวิตย่านเมืองเก่าซึ่งขับเคลื่อนโดยชุมชน โดยอ้างอิงกรณีศึกษาเชิงประจักษ์จากกาดกองเก่าในจังหวัดแพร่ งานวิจัยนี้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพซึ่งรวบรวมข้อมูลจากสามแหล่งได้แก่ การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง การวิเคราะห์เอกสารและการสังเกตการณ์แบบไม่มีส่วนร่วม การวิจัยครั้งนี้เน้นให้เห็นนวัตกรรมทางสังคมในบริบทการพัฒนาชุมชน 3 ประการ ดังนี้ ประการแรก ที่บริหารจัดการกาดกองเก่าประสบความสำเร็จในการใช้ทุนทางวัฒนธรรม (โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งมรดกทางสถาปัตยกรรมพื้นถิ่นและองค์ความรู้ที่สั่งสมข้ามรุ่น) เป็นกลไกในการรับมือกับปัญหาสังคมสูงวัย การเสื่อมโทรมของบ้านเรือนเก่า และการสูญเสียอัตลักษณ์ของชุมชน ขณะเดียวกันก็ช่วยสร้าง

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รายได้เสริมให้ชุมชน ประการที่สอง กาดกองเก่าแสดงให้เห็นถึงการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมในท้องถิ่นแบบมีส่วนร่วม ซึ่งการท่องเที่ยวไม่ได้เป็นไปเพื่อการแสวงหาประโยชน์เชิงพาณิชย์เพียงอย่างเดียว แต่ทำหน้าที่เป็นเครื่องมือในการอนุรักษ์มรดกในท้องถิ่นและสร้างความสมานฉันท์ทางสังคมและในพื้นที่ ประการที่สาม กาดกองเก่าเป็นตัวอย่างของโครงการพัฒนาชุมชนระดับรากหญ้าที่ขับเคลื่อนโดยพลเมือง ซึ่งสะท้อนความเข้มแข็งของภาคประชาสังคม ตลอดจนการทำงานร่วมกับภาครัฐในฐานะภาคีโดยเครือข่ายความร่วมมือเหล่านี้ ทำหน้าที่เป็นโครงสร้างพื้นฐานที่ยึดหยุ่นและมาจากล่างขึ้นบน (bottom-up) เพื่อส่งมอบบริการในระดับท้องถิ่น นอกจากนี้ในทางวิชาการ ผลการศึกษาช่วยขยายองค์ความรู้ทางทฤษฎีเกี่ยวกับนวัตกรรมทางสังคมและการพัฒนาชุมชน โดยชี้ให้เห็นถึงความเชื่อมโยงระหว่างนวัตกรรมทางสังคมระดับรากหญ้ากับการพัฒนาชุมชน ซึ่งนำไปสู่การฟื้นฟูค่านิยมพื้นที่โดยมีชุมชนเป็นศูนย์กลาง และขับเคลื่อนโดยพลเมืองเข้มแข็ง

คำสำคัญ: นวัตกรรมทางสังคมจากรากหญ้า, การพัฒนาชุมชน, การพัฒนาที่ขับเคลื่อนโดยภาคประชาสังคม, การท่องเที่ยวโดยชุมชน

Social Innovation and Community Development: A Civil Society-Driven Model from Kad Kong Kao, Phrae Province

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Abstract

This article examines the modalities of social innovation as instantiated in community-driven revitalisation of an old town area, with empirical reference to the Kad Kong Kao (กาตคองเก่า) initiative in Phrae Province, Northern Thailand. Methodologically anchored in a qualitative research approach - drawing on triangulated evidence from semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, and non-participant observation - the study elucidates three analytically salient dimensions of social innovation. First, the Kad Kong Kao management team successfully mobilises cultural capital (specifically vernacular architectural heritage and intergenerational embodied knowledge) as a mechanism for simultaneously addressing demographic aging, the dereliction

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of historical domiciles, and the erosion of communal identity, while engendering complementary subsistence economies. Second, Kad Kong Kao exhibits a collaborative development of local cultural tourism, wherein tourism functions not as an extractive modality of commodification but as a vector for endogenous heritage conservation and socio-spatial cohesion. Third, Kad Kong Kao exemplifies a citizen-driven, grassroots community development project characterised by civil society activeness and co-production with public sector institutions, whereby associative networks constitute flexible and bottom-up infrastructures of local service delivery. The findings extend theoretical debates on social innovation and community development by demonstrating the interplay between grassroots social innovation and community development that results in community-centric, area-based revitalisation steered by an engaged citizenry.

Keyword: Grassroots Social Innovation, Community Development, Civil Society-Driven Local Development, Community-Based Tourism

1. Introduction

The inception of Kad Kong Kao (กาตกองเก่า), situated on Kham Lue Road (ถนนคำลือ) in Phrae province, represents an endogenous initiative driven by the active local citizenry. The materialisation of this collective bottom-up endeavour is a cultural pedestrian night market, which functions as a communal space for the commerce of local cuisine and artisanal products. A myriad of cultural activities, run by community members, serves as a conduit for the dissemination of vernacular heritage and a unique communal identity. These manifestations encompass photographic exhibitions of the old town, performances of folk music, and screenings of classic cinematography. Furthermore, vendors and visitors are encouraged to wear the traditional *mor hom* attire (เสื้อหม้อห้อม), a sartorial emblem of local culture. In this respect, Kad Kong Kao has become one of the quintessential meeting points for Phrae's denizens. It is thus simultaneously a vital locus of intracommunity commerce, and a celebrated destination for cultural tourism.

The Kad Kong Kao initiative could offer valuable insights into the dynamics between grassroots social innovation and community development. Community development is addressed in this research in relation to the urban regeneration perspective, underscoring the meaningful and multidimensional involvement of local community in shaping changes in the environment in which they live.¹ Social innovation is understood as “the invention, development and implementation of

¹ Angelika Krüger, “Local Communities and Urban Regeneration: The Contribution of Community Education,” *Community Development Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (October 1993), 342-354.

new ideas to solve social problems faced by individuals, groups or communities.”² This definition simultaneously highlights the flow from ideation to execution and collective challenges that need addressing. From these definitions, this research focuses on active and meaningful participation of individuals, groups or communities in developing new solutions in response to the challenges they are facing in the context of community development.

Proceeding from these academic and empirical points of departure, this study endeavours to explain the nature of civil society-driven innovation in community development, utilising Kad Kong Kao as an illustrative case study. The study, therefore, sets the following research objectives: to investigate the factors that influence the creation and propulsion of grassroots social innovation and to propound a replicable model of citizen-initiated social innovation from which other communities might draw key lessons learned. The principal research question is thus formulated: What are the defining characteristics of community development innovation when catalysed by civil society actors?

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the scope of this research and its methodological roadmap. Section 3 articulates the theoretical framework. Section 4 provides background information about Kad Kong Kao. Section 5 presents the key findings. Section 6 discusses the findings and offers the researcher’s reflections on the insights of this research.

² Peter R.A. Oeij, Wouter van der Torre, Fietje Vaas and Steven Dhondt, “Understanding social innovation as an innovation process: Applying the innovation journey model,” *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 101 (August 2019), 244.

2. Scope and methodological roadmap

2.1 Scope of the study

The study is geographically delimited to Kad Kong Kao, located in Nai Wiang Subdistrict, Mueang Phrae District, Phrae Province. Intellectually, the research situates the case study within broader academic literatures on grassroots social innovation, active citizenry, and community-based tourism.

2.2 Methodological roadmap

The study adopts a qualitative case study design that enables a context-sensitive and in-depth empirical inquiry of the case³. Data collection employed three modalities:

- **Documentary research:** Examination of documentary sources, including printed and digital materials related to Kad Kong Kao
- **In-depth semi-structured interviews:** Fifteen purposively sampled informants, including five Kad Kong Kao management team members, five representatives of the Active Generation of Phrae Family (ข่ายลูกหลานเมืองแพร่), and five local vendors. Interviews probed collaborative community development, mobilisation of cultural assets, and strategic developmental visions.
- **Non-participant observation:** Observing interactions between committee members, vendors, and consumers in order to capture the lived texture of socio-spatial dynamics.

³ Arya Priya, "Case Study Methodology of Qualitative Research: Navigating the Conundrums in Its Application," *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 70, No. 1, (January 2021), 95.

Collected empirical data have been used to triangulate against one another to ensure reliability and accuracy. Data analysis has been conducted according to the thematic analysis method with special reference to reliable coding and theme conceptualisation.⁴ The researcher performed a thematic analysis derived from a corpus of textual data built on interview transcripts, field notes from non-participant observation sessions, and collected documents, including social media posts. The analysis was executed via a three-step process, consonant with the framework recommended by Attride-Stirling (2001).⁵ The three steps are as follows: commencing with a breakdown of the text, proceeding to an exploration of the text to discern thematic essences, and culminating in synthesising the core themes to generate a holistic understanding.

3. Theoretical lens

3.1 Social Innovation

The theoretical lens of this study is informed primarily by a stream of scholarship on grassroots social innovation. To begin with, for the sake of conceptual clarity, the researcher distinguishes between business innovation, which is oriented towards profit maximisation, and social innovation, which is fundamentally directed at addressing societal exigencies.⁶

⁴ Gareth Terry, Nikki Hayfield, Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, "Thematic Analysis," In Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton-Rogers (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017), 17-37.

⁵ Jennifer Attride-Stirling, "Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research," *Qualitative Research*, Vol.1, No.3 (December 2001), 385-405.

⁶ Geoff Mulgan, "The Process of Social Innovation," *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization*, Vol.1, No. 2 (Spring 2006), 146.

Theorising social innovation is predicated upon the principle of novelty within social processes that conduce to the amelioration of societal problems. Hence, it involves the creation of alternatives or approaches that diverge from orthodox approaches to redress extant social predicaments. Social innovation is thus linked to the fulfillment of social needs and societal changes with minimal social costs.⁷ Moreover, it can take place at different levels including groups, local communities, regions, to name but a few.⁸ While the resolution of social problems is a continuous process, the important contribution of social innovation is the reconfiguration of relational dynamics and societal practices into transformation-oriented veritable solutions⁹, transcending mere problem-awareness and the iterative application of conventional approaches. In this view, social innovation is often construed as being synonymous with social change. However, it is not circumscribed merely by the generation of such change.¹⁰ It also encompasses the emergence

⁷ Geoff Mulgan, "The Process of Social Innovation," *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 2006), 145-162.

⁸ Patrick Dawson and Lisa Daneil, "Understanding social innovation: a provisional framework," *International Journal of Technology Management*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (May 2010), 16.

⁹ Dmitri Domanski, Jürgen Howaldt and Christoph Kaletka, "A comprehensive concept of social innovation and its implications for the local context - on the growing importance of social innovation ecosystems and infrastructures," *European Planning Studies* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2020), 461.; Robert Grimm, Christopher Fox, Susan Baines and Kevin Albertson, "Social innovation, an answer to contemporary societal challenges? Locating the concept in theory and practice," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (November 2013), 436-455.

¹⁰ Hans-Werner Franz, Josef Hochgerner and Jürgen Howaldt, "Challenge Social Innovation: And Introduction," In Hans-Werner, Josef Hochgerner and Jürgen Howaldt (eds.), *Challenge Social Innovation, Potentials for Business, Social Entrepreneurship, Welfare and Civil Society*, (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012), 1-18.

of new social values that more constructively address contemporary challenges and the recombination or re-imagination of existing assets to produce tangible outcomes.¹¹ Furthermore, Nicholls and Murdock explicate that “goods and services that enhance the quality of human life or generate positive societal impacts are considered constituent elements of social innovation.”¹²

In addition, social innovators widely believe that social innovation arises within a context of a specific locality.¹³ This is a perspicuous notion as any innovation intended to tackle local needs or problems must take into account the area’s specific conditions, including the nature of its problems, the community’s readiness and capacity, indigenous knowledge systems, geographical and physical characteristics, and extant interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Terstriep, Rehfeld, and Kleverbeck (2020) contend that the efficacy of a social innovation ecosystem is contingent upon the following factors: 1) key stakeholder groups, with civil society organisations and state agencies frequently acting as the primary nodes of the ecosystem; 2) structural and institutional factors, such as funding modalities, regional development

¹¹ Anika Noack and Tobias Federwisch, “Social Innovation in Rural Regions: Older Adults and Creative Community Development,” *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 85, No.4 (December 2020), 1021-1044.; Rafael Ziegler, “Social innovation as a collaborative concept,” *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol. 30, No. 4, (July 2017), 388-405.

¹² Alex Nicholls and Alex Murdock, *Social Innovation: Blurring Boundaries to Reconfigure Markets*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹³ Judith Terstriep, Maria Kleverbeck, Alessandro Deserti and Francesca Rizzo, *Comparative report on social innovation across Europe.*, SIMPACT (2015), http://www.simpact-project.eu/publications/reports/SIMPACT_D32.pdf.

strategies and policies, and regulatory frameworks; and 3) knowledge utilisation approaches, encompassing the co-creation and dissemination of knowledge.¹⁴

3.2 Community-initiated local revitalisation and active citizenry

The theoretical lens of this research also benefits from a set of literature emphasising the proactive role of citizens who shape the direction of local area revitalisation. The conceptual bedrock of active citizenship lies in the nexus between the individual and the community. This view resonates with Varakorn Samakoses (2015), who defines the active citizen as an individual possessing “social responsibility, a role in the community, and a spirit of volunteerism and public-mindedness.”¹⁵ Varakorn further highlights that this status is intertwined with a sense of belonging and collective responsibility—a foundational belief that underpins the work of civil society.¹⁶ In the same vein, Brannan, John, and Stoker (2006) posit that active citizenship is distinct from nominal citizenship, as it necessitates a proactive engagement in societal initiative and a willingness to participate in both social and political processes¹⁷.

¹⁴ Judith Terstriep, Dieter Rehfeld and Maria Kleverbeck, “Favourable social innovation ecosystem(s)? – An explorative approach,” *European Planning Studies*, Vol. 28, No.5 (January 2020), 881-905.

¹⁵ วรภรณ์ สามโกเศศ, “ว่าด้วย Active citizen,” *Thaipublica*, (website), <https://thaipublica.org/2015/08/varakorn-125/> (accessed 23 July 2020).

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Tessa Brannan, Peter John and Gerry Stoker, ‘Active Citizenship and Effective Public Services and Programmes: How Can We Know What Really Works?,’ *Urban Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 5/6 (May 2006), 993-1008.

Glover's (2004) work presents a consonant view but further delineates the concept into a tripartite dimensionality: ethical, integrative, and educative. Ethical active citizenship links citizenship with participation in the pursuit of the public good, where individuals sacrifice personal resources for collective benefit. Integrative citizenship posits that all citizens occupy a multiplicity of roles. This dimension enables individuals to combine these various roles to contribute to the public good. The educative dimension is a process that cultivates individuals' moral and intellectual sensibilities, fostering a sense of community and encouraging the transcendence of individualism and self-interest.¹⁸ It also facilitates an understanding of the linkage between private and public interests.

Furthermore, Eriksson (2012) observes that by the late 20th century, policymakers became cognizant of a widespread rejection of representative institutions, concomitant with a burgeoning public confidence in their own capacity for self-determination. In line with this literature, active citizen scholarship further underscores a sense of belonging to a particular community and community responsibility. Empirical studies, moreover, have found that citizen participation tends to enhance the quality of community development.¹⁹ Therefore, participation and active citizenship are mutually reinforcing and should ideally co-evolve. Additionally, the work of Fraser et al. (2018) on community mobilisation describes it as a process originating from the lived

¹⁸ Troy D. Glover, "The 'Community' Center and the Social Construction of Citizenship," *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 26 (2004), 63-83.

¹⁹ Robert Cassidy, *Livable Cities: A Grass-roots Guide to Rebuilding Urban America*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1980).

experiences and a visceral awareness of everyday problems, which in turn leads to a synergistic consolidation of community efforts to resolve those issues.²⁰ The objective of such mobilisation is to bolster the well-being of families, friends, and future generations. In summation, the active citizen embodies an individual's sense of belonging to a community and a commitment to be a driving force in problem-solving and creating positive social transformation. Consequently, effective and sustainable community development is contingent, to a considerable extent, upon the energy of a citizenry prepared to assume a vigorous role in instigating change.

Before proceeding further, it is important to consider the limitations of community-initiated initiative. One is disengagement while the other is concerned with reconciling different preferences that may arise as a result of the inclusion of a plethora of stakeholders (Perkin, 2010: 117). In this respect, citizen-driven community development or grassroots initiatives should not be automatically idealised because at times they may bring about operational pitfalls and over-reliance on certain groups. This further implies a free rider problem.

3.3 Community-based tourism

The last chunk of scholarship upon which this research is built is concerned with community-based tourism. Within international scholarly discourse, the notion of community-based tourism (CBT) is,

²⁰ Sarah Louise Fraser, Shawn-Renee Hordyk, Nancy Etok, and Caroline Weetaltuk, "Exploring Community Mobilization in Northern Quebec: Motivators, Challenges, and Resilience in Action," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol.64, No.1-2 (2020), 159-171.

in essence, centred on the participatory engagement of the local populace in the promulgation of tourism initiatives that are consonant with the community's socio-economic conditions.²¹ In communities possessing distinctive cultural assets and ways of life - encompassing culinary traditions, festivals, archaeological sites, and vernacular architectural heritage - tourism manifests as cultural tourism.²² These assets simultaneously offer aesthetic and cultural experiences to visitors.²³ Consequently, the participatory involvement of residents in the administration of local tourism is of paramount importance to avoid obtrusiveness and detrimental ramifications on the community fabrics. Concurrently, in several cases, communities have demonstrated the capacity to leverage their endogenous capital and extant resources to autonomously engender tourism ventures.²⁴

²¹ Regina Scheyvens, "Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities," *Tourism Management*, Vol. 20, No.2 (April 1999), 245-249.

²² Greg Richards, "Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, Vol. 36 (September 2018), 12-21; Merve Demiröz, Hanna Elisabet Åberg and Claudia de Luca, "Shaping the Relation Between Heritage and Tourism: Taxonomies of Sustainable Cultural Tourism for Local Development," *Heritage & Society* (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159032X.2025.2470077>; UNWTO, General Assembly - Twenty-Second Session <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858> (accessed 5 October 2025).

²³ Robert A. Stebbins, "Cultural tourism as serious leisure," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (October 1996), 948-950.

²⁴ Bethany Rex, "Community Management of Local Cultural Assets: Implications for Inequality and Publicness," In Victoria Durrer, Abigail Gilmore, Leila Jancovich and David Stevenson (eds.), *Cultural Policy is Local: Understanding Cultural Policy as Situated Practice*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 115-137.; Silvia Cerisola and Elisa Panzera, "Heritage tourism and local prosperity: An empirical investigation of their controversial relationship," *Tourism Economics*, Vol. 31, No. 5 (August 2025), 964-983.

Furthermore, the administration of CBT is contingent upon the community's or locality's intellectual assets including intangible cultural heritage and experiences. This pertains to the intellectual capabilities required to capitalise on extant communal assets and the capacity to innovate upon vernacular wisdom to generate goods and services that resonate with the predilections of both tourists and the community.²⁵ In this vein, Adams and Sandarupa (2018) posit that indigenous knowledge is a crucial factor in cultivating an adaptive tourism entrepreneurship, particularly within contexts characterised by conflict and tourism volatility. In this paradigm, community-based intellectual assets function as a critical problem-solving resource.²⁶

To summarise, the theoretical lens of this study draws on three sets of scholarly work, as highlighted in Figure 1. These bodies of literature articulate the three main analytical components: social innovation, community-initiated local revitalisation, and community-based tourism. The relationship between these components is mutually gravitational. Active citizens are the key drivers of social innovation, collaboratively creating novel solutions to revitalise their communities through a non-intrusive, bottom-up, and community-centred tourism model. The interaction

²⁵ Serena Lonardi and Yvonne Unterpertinger, "The Relevance of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditional Languages for the Tourism Experience: The Case of Ladin in South Tyrol," *Sustainability*, Vol. 14 (February 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14052729>.

²⁶ Kathleen M. Adams and Dirk Sandarupa, "A Room with a View: Local Knowledge and Tourism Entrepreneurship in an Unlikely Indonesian Locale." *Asian Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 3, No.1 (June 2018), 1-26.

between these components generates societal and economic benefits for local residents while simultaneously stimulating area-based revitalisation. Moreover, such a community development approach fosters a sense of belonging, which in turn reinforces community ownership of the innovative solutions.

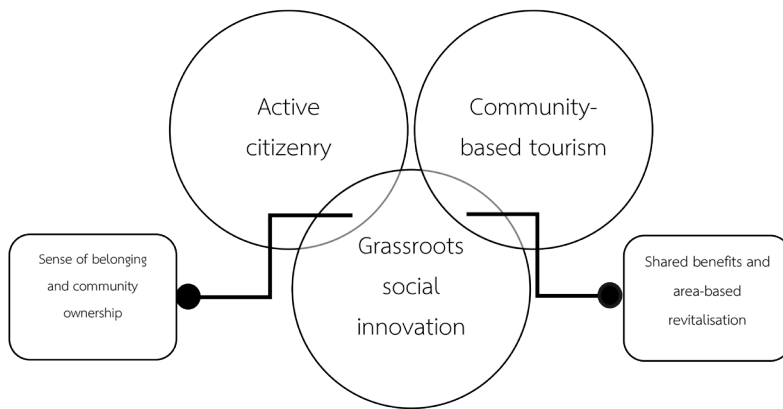


Figure 1 Summary of the theoretical lens

4. The Case: Kad Kong Kao

Kad Kong Kao is a pedestrian night market initiated by community actors in Phrae province, northern Thailand. Phrae is historically significant, with teakwood architecture and a rich communal culture. Over decades, many traditional buildings fell into disrepair; sidewalk commerce declined; younger generations migrated for work. Responding to these challenges, local civil society organisations leveraged the cultural heritage of the *Phra Non* community (ชุมชนพระนอน) to revive street markets and attract domestic tourists. The *Phra Non* community is in Phrae's old town area.

Key actors include:

- The Kad Kong Kao management team, which is made up of local vendors, elders, and heritage activists.
- The Active Generation of Phrae Family, which works to foster local pride and preserve cultural heritage and identity.
- Phrae Local Architecture Conservation Club, which focuses on built heritage restoration and knowledge dissemination.

Activities include: periodic market events, guided heritage walks, promotion of local crafts and culinary delights, use of heritage buildings as venue spaces, and photographic or nostalgic exhibitions.

Notable achievements include: an increase in visitors, revenue generation for local vendors, renewed interest among youth in heritage practices, and improvements in awareness of built heritage in the old town areas.

5. Findings

Executing thematic analysis, the researcher has distilled the following core themes from the corpus of text: the capitalisation of cultural assets, tourism-based collaborative community development, and partnership with the public sector. These thematic constructs collectively delineate the characteristics of civil society-driven innovation in community development, as exemplified by the case of Kad Kong Kao in Phrae province. A detailed explication of this analysis is furnished in what follows.

5.1 Active citizenship, communal spirit and the drivers of social innovation

This sub-section illustrates the ways in which local active citizens meaningfully engage in social innovation and community development. The genesis of Kad Kong Kao can be traced to the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which precipitated the return of a group of Phrae's descendants to their ancestral province. This cohort was composed of entrepreneurs, highly skilled labourers, artists, and corporate professionals. Upon their repatriation, these individuals confronted questions regarding their capacity to reside, subsist, and pursue livelihoods within their hometown. This incited an endeavour to coalesce into the "Phrae Lovers Club (ชมรมคนรักเมืองแพร่)" around 2001-2002, with the objective of prospecting for avenues, approaches, or activities to develop Phrae into a viable habitat for themselves and the future generations. As one informant from the "the Active Generation of Phrae Family" elucidated:

"During the *Tom Yum Goong* (ต้มยำกุ้ง) economic crisis of 1997, myself and a number of my contemporaries returned to Phrae province due to employment precarity and economic stagnation in major urban centres like Bangkok or Chiang Mai. Returning to Phrae posed the formidable challenge of securing employment. To establish a business, one would need to rely on tourism to stimulate the local economy, and the fact that Phrae is quite unknown was a significant impediment.

Consequently, an informal gathering of Phrae natives working in the local civil society sector and those repatriated from large cities began to form. We commenced activities pertaining to the history of Phrae to make known the extant cultural resources.”²⁷

As familiarity burgeoned among the civil society actors dedicated to Phrae’s development, activities spread in accordance with the predilections of various sub-groups. A discernible network, however, did not fully crystallise until the establishment of the “the Active Generation of Phrae Family”. One emergent sub-group was dedicated to the conservation of Phrae’s old town, spearheaded by Mr. Chinworn Chomphuphan of the “Phrae Local Architectural Conservation Club (ชมรมอนุรักษ์สถาปัตยกรรมท้องถิ่นเมืองแพร่).” This club identified the salient problems of dereliction of old houses in the old town areas and the demolition of historic homes, resulting from their sale to outsiders or the decision by the owners to replace them with modern structures. Both issues were intrinsically linked to the erosion of community identity, engendering apprehension within the club that, in the near future, the community would suffer a complete loss of identity and its capacity to anchor its members. In other words, a sense of belonging was evanescent in tandem with the physical structures that served as the tangible repositories of community identity. The club’s work began with the compilation of data on old houses and a study of community history.

²⁷ P.3 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 30 November 2020.

This yielded a repository of photographs, information on the houses and their (previous/current) owners or heirs, and the dissemination of related historical narratives via online platforms and printed publications. This historical data was subsequently integrated into projects aimed at promulgating the cultural capital of the old town, such as the “Pho Baan Aew Wiang” (พ่อบ้าน แอ่วเวียง: Gaze at Houses, Roam the City) project in 2013, which featured tricycle tours narrating the history of the old buildings. Subsequently, “the Active Generation of Phrae Family” began to coordinate with other civil society actors to propel larger-scale projects. This loose network of local civil society organisations was a pivotal factor in generating innovations in spatio-cultural management for community development.

The emergence of the “Active Generation of Phrae Family” network was a pretext for the Kad Kong Kao initiative. The network was characterised by its informal, loose-knit structure, with members convening periodically for consultations and discussions. In this meeting, members would contribute perspectives from their respective fields of expertise and interest to collectively devise community development activities or projects. An interview revealed that “each member was already driving issues they deemed important, each within their own sphere of work. When we convened, it was like throwing ideas into a central pool, for anyone to take and run with [...]. We also shared what problems we encountered and what issues we could collaboratively advance.” (P.1).²⁸ In this respect, the “Active Generation of Phrae Family” functioned as a

²⁸ P.1 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 29 November 2020.

clearinghouse for information and problem-solving recommendations, where ideas for urban or community development could be freely adopted, even if the originator was not directly involved in the execution. Members could also solicit opinions and counsel on community development approaches aligned with their interests. As the network comprised both seasoned local activists and newcomers, these consultations inherently involved the transference of know-how. Typically, after a meeting, members would disperse to prepare and then loosely schedule their next meeting, which often occurred extemporaneously in response to new events, activities, or ideas. As one member articulated: “What we do is to ignite a fire (of thought/activity), get it burning, and then step back, so that they, the people, can take ownership (of the idea/activity).”²⁹

Thus, the initial aggregation into the “Active Generation of Phrae Family” was the crucial genesis for a plethora of activities, including tricycling events, local art exhibitions, and conservation projects for the old community and its houses. One of the most significant activities to emerge from this collective effort was Kad Kong Kao.

5.2 Core theme 1: Capitalisation of cultural assets

In 2008, one of Kad Kong Kao management team members, who had previously relocated to Bangkok for education and work, returned to Phrae and observed profound community transformations: old wooden houses lay derelict, youth and the younger labour force were out-migrating for employment, the traditional intimacy of the community

²⁹ P.4 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 30 November 2020.

was decaying, and there was a lack of continuation in lifestyle, culture, and social capital.³⁰ Cognizant of these changes, he entered into discussions with the “Active Generation of Phrae Family” group leaders. Initially, he sought to advance two principal objectives: first, the conservation of old wooden houses and community history, and second, the organisation of activities to revitalise the community. This entailed leveraging social and cultural capital for economic gain, while concurrently creating alternative livelihood options to stanch the out-migration of residents seeking opportunities in major cities. Following deliberations within the local civil society network, he crystallised the concept of creating a “living history” in which everyone could participate - that is, to open a central, communally-owned space by organising a pedestrian cultural market named “Kad Kong Kao,” which would feature the sale of local cuisine, performances of folk music, and exhibitions on community history.

Concurrently, another predicament garnering the network’s attention was the increasing proportion of elderly residents in the old town, a trend consonant with Thailand’s broader demographic shift towards an aging society. Although this issue was not idiosyncratic to Phrae’s old town, it was accorded special significance because network members perceived that the community’s elders were passing away without transmitting their indigenous wisdom, either due to a lack of successors or neglect by the community. As one informant shared:

³⁰ P.2 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 28 November 2020.

“Presently, there are more elderly people in the community. Their children and grandchildren have gone to work elsewhere. It has come to a point where traditional occupations, both handicrafts and cuisine, are disappearing along with the old people. There are still many healthy elders because Phrae has good food and is not stressful [...] but the problem is there is no one to inherit the recipes, the methods for traditional crafts. So, everything is being lost.”³¹

This interview excerpt reveals that the aging of the community presented Phrae’s old town with a dual set of problems: the dereliction of old houses and the failure of the elderly to transmit their wisdom. This became the central challenge for the civil society movement in Phrae - to develop the old town by addressing both issues simultaneously.

The spatial organisation of Kad Kong Kao is inextricably linked to its cultural assets. It occupies a street approximately 200 meters long, flanked by old houses and an old community that once bustled with commerce. This commerce can be characterised in two ways. First, the old town area was historically a centre for producing silver bowls (ขันเงิน), boasting renowned artisans with unique designs. However, few traditional craftsmen remain, and thus this original community enterprise no longer drives the local economy. Second, because the

³¹ P.2 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 28 November 2020.

street is proximate to the former Forestry School (โรงเรียนการป่าไม้)³², residents operated restaurants and grocery stores, with students as their primary clients. When the school ceased its instructional activities, these dependent businesses closed down. With this historical-economic context in mind, one of the informants wished for each household to sell its products, food, and agricultural goods again, as these items reflected the memories of the community's elders, including his own, from when the school was operating.

In pursuit of this endeavour, the Kad Kong Kao initiative was envisioned to recreate the atmosphere of the bustling market that once existed around the Forestry School area. The initial three years constituted a period of experimentation, characterised by activity design, solicitation of feedback, and iterative problem-solving. This phase was genuinely initiated, driven, and rectified by the community, devoid of formal government intervention (assistance from local administrative organisations occurred sporadically, dictated by specific functional necessities). It is noteworthy that the initial funding for Kad Kong Kao was provided by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth). However, subsequent operations did not solicit additional external funding but relied almost exclusively on the space rental fees.

The second phase, which lasted from 2013 until the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2019, marked the period when Kad Kong Kao began to gain widespread recognition. Television programmes started featuring

³² Recently, it was restructured as the Pracharat Institute for Forest Conservation (สถาบันพระราชารัฐพิทักษ์ป่า).

the market, and visitors from other provinces visited and shared their experiences through various online channels. This influx of outsiders and tourists provided vendors with supplementary income. The frontages of residents' homes were transformed into commercial spaces, thereby establishing Kad Kong Kao as a new additional source of revenue for the community. Concurrently, the old houses in the vicinity served as the overall scenic backdrop for the market and a picturesque setting for historical exhibitions. Furthermore, the success of Kad Kong Kao attracted the interest of both local and central government agencies, which began to offer support and co-organise certain activities, such as community tourism projects in partnership with the Tourism Authority of Thailand. The involvement of government agencies brought both advantages and other impacts, which will be analysed subsequently. Nevertheless, the researcher must emphasise here that the relationship with government agencies was one of partnership, not of regulatory oversight. The entire management process remains under the purview of the Kad Kong Kao management team, whose members are mainly drawn from the vendors and entrepreneurs within the market. It can be said that Kad Kong Kao is currently in its third phase, encompassing the post-COVID-19 recovery period to the present. This period can be characterised by moderate success and incremental adjustments to emergent conditions. According to recent Facebook posts on relevant official government pages and Google reviews, Kad Kong Kao still attracts many visitors. However, it does not offer a genuinely new approach to capitalisation of cultural assets that would set it apart from previous developments.

From the foregoing account, it is evident that the civil society actors in Phrae during the formative period of Kad Kong Kao recognised the historical and cultural capital of the old town. Simultaneously, they sought to leverage these assets to resolve extant problems, namely the underutilisation of space, the challenges faced by the elderly population, and the evanescence of collective community memory.

5.3 Core theme 2: Tourism-Based Collaborative Community Development

In this section, the researcher aims to elucidate another socially innovative characteristic of Kad Kong Kao: the collaborative management of the old town's development and the market itself. The inherent capacities and activeness of the community members were harnessed as the operational foundation for Kad Kong Kao. This collaborative work, structured as a horizontal network, fostered a sense of belonging and ownership among residents over the market and the old town. This, in turn, led to a concerted effort to conserve the town while managing community-based tourism. In this respect, this model of grassroots community development illustrates a social innovation genuinely propelled by the community members, as will be delineated in what follows.

5.3.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Local tourism management, community development, and the cultivation of belonging

Prior to launching Kad Kong Kao in 2010, the “Active Generation of Phrae Family” was already engaged in the conservation and development of the old town, compiling historical data and photographing historical sites and old houses as a basis for their advocacy. During this

data-gathering phase, the idea of organising cultural tourism groups to tour the old town was proposed. With the inception of Kad Kong Kao, community development became intrinsically linked to tourism. The model observed in this case is an innovative form of community-based tourism (CBT), wherein tourism becomes a bespoke tool for solving specific community problems and renewing the value of community. It is apparent that the old town residents involved in Kad Kong Kao's development are well-acquainted and adhere to a shared set of values, consonant with Johnson's (2010) proposition that a community's internal dynamics are indicative of its tourism development trajectory.³³ In the case of Kad Kong Kao, the values espoused by the management team and entrepreneurs revolve around being a community that preserves the memories of past generations through both tangible assets, such as old houses and historical sites, and intangible ones, such as indigenous wisdom and ways of life. They also highlight the goal of utilising Kad Kong Kao to cultivate a unified sense of belonging among the local residents, encompassing both long-standing elderly inhabitants and the younger ones who have recently returned. Consequently, commercial activities within Kad Kong Kao are intentionally oriented towards benefiting the community, eschewing the attraction of external investors in favour of trading in goods for which the community already possesses capital, such as local food and handicrafts. The initial target demographic for this CBT model is consumers from within Phrae's municipal district.

³³ Peter A. Johnson, "Realizing Rural Community Based Tourism Development: Prospects for Social-Economy Enterprises," *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, Vol. 5, No.1/2 (December 2010), 158.

This sub-thematic analysis further reveals that since Kad Kong Kao operates only on Saturdays from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM, its commercial purpose is not to serve as a primary livelihood in the manner of a business-oriented night bazaar (ตลาดโต้รุ่ง). Rather, it provides a supplementary income channel for residents, coupled with opportunities for social interaction. Furthermore, the community's commercial endeavours are not primarily driven by the pursuit of business success; a reasonable profit suffices. This ethos fosters a convivial atmosphere, devoid of intense commercial competition. Moreover, it helps to strengthen the sense of belonging among the local residents. A portion of the sales revenue is allocated to space rental fees, which constitutes a central resource pool for managing the market's operational costs, including storage for tables and chairs, electricity, and waste collection. In this sense, Kad Kong Kao reflects a community that utilises tourism to fortify itself³⁴ without becoming so dependent as to lose its communal identity. Therefore, the development spurred by Kad Kong Kao does not aim primarily to scale-up community tourism or become overly reliant on external tourists. Instead, it focuses on generating economic value from the community's way of life and converting this capital into funds for addressing specific local needs. The community consensus is to avoid transforming Kad Kong Kao into a night market targeting external

³⁴ See also Oliver Mtapuri and Andrea Giampiccoli, "Interrogating the role of the state and non-state actors in community-based tourism ventures: Toward a model for spreading the benefits to the wider community," *South African Geographical Journal*, Vol. 95, No.1 (June 2013), 1-15.

tourists, as seen in Chiang Mai, Pattaya, and other major tourist cities.³⁵

In addition, dialogue with community members about the market's management is accepted as a method of stakeholder consultation. On numerous occasions, external entrepreneurs have sought to rent space to sell products incongruous with the community's culture, such as fast fashion, second-hand clothing, or other goods typical of night bazaars. However, the community wishes to preserve Kad Kong Kao as a cultural street that embeds the community's collective memory and has thus denied some of these requests, a decision reached through consultation with the management team and community leaders. Furthermore, the community has been trying to guard its autonomy in decisions regarding the development of the old town's tourist areas. Consequently, they deliberately refrain from seeking government support, which could introduce development objectives divergent from the community's original aspirations.

5.3.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Old town conservation and grassroots community development

Another salient theme emerging from the data analysis concerns the value of the old town in relation to community development, viewed through the lens of the community's area-specific assets. The residents perceive the old town of Phrae as a communal treasure imbued with their collective memories.³⁶ Therefore, the old houses and structures within the Kad Kong Kao area and its neighbourhood are central to community

³⁵ C.2, C.4, E.1, and P.1, (Anonymous), Interview by author, 28-30 November 2020.

³⁶ P.2 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 28 November 2020.

development. All activities and projects must be conducted without adversely impacting the old town. In other words, any development project must take in account conservational practices.

To illustrate, Kad Kong Kao regularly features exhibitions of old photographs and screenings of classic films. It coordinates with the “Phrae Local Architectural Conservation Club” to organise the “Pun Plian Pae” (ปั่น เปลี่ยน แป้) event, which began in 2013. The shared objectives of these activities are twofold: first, to galvanise local awareness and appreciation for the old town’s architecture and landscape, and second, to raise funds for its conservation, particularly to assist owners of old wooden houses with maintenance and to dissuade them from demolition and sale. Kad Kong Kao’s function here is to serve as a communication platform for conservation efforts; in other words, it is an instrument for promoting old town preservation.

The community, moreover, supports and recognises the value of the old town and its historical sites, aiming to preserve them as a matter of “community pride”. In this respect, the case of Kad Kong Kao demonstrates that heritage conservation serves the community by facilitating development that eschews rapidly disruptive change. The residents in the vicinity of the market do not wish to see the old town transformed into a site for mass tourism but seek to maintain its originality and the value of its old houses. This further suggests that Kad Kong Kao serves to accentuate and make manifest these community values.

The conservation work on Kham Lue Road (ถนนคำลือ) and its milieu is partly necessitated by the fact that many of the old houses are

privately owned, precluding direct state intervention. It is thus incumbent upon the community to collaborate. As one informant described:

“We try to make the descendants of the old town’s residents see that their grandparents’ houses have value, that they cannot be replicated if demolished [...]. The wooden houses around Kad Kong Kao are 50-60 years old or more, built by skilled Phrae *sala* (สถาปนา [ช่างฝีมือ]). Some have been torn down and sold to others who built new ones because wooden houses are difficult to maintain. But we try to persuade the community to help preserve the remaining old houses.”³⁷

Thus, the old wooden houses in the Kad Kong Kao area are preserved through a collective agreement among residents to maintain them for as long as possible. A further observation is that the impetus for conserving these original structures is not state-mandated but is driven by the community itself, indicating a horizontal community development trajectory.

However, it is undeniable that in the past 4-5 years, certain changes have occurred in the approach to conservation and development. A number of homeowners have transitioned into entrepreneurs, focusing on business ventures or partnering with external investors, such as converting old houses into cafes or small entertainment venues. While the

³⁷ P.4 (Anonymous), Interview by author, 30 November 2020.

external structures remain unaltered, a proliferation of such businesses could potentially impact the original conservationist ethos. Such ventures are profit-driven, and the sense of belonging and ownership of memory may become attenuated.

To sum up, the community-led conservation of the old town and tourism management of Kad Kong Kao represent a social innovation. Community-led conservation is a novel solution to the problems of dereliction and demolition of original structures that embody collective memory. Meanwhile, the community-led tourism management provides a socio-demographic solution: it generates supplementary income for residents, provides activities for the elderly, and ensures the community is cared for in place of older residents who have passed away or relocated. In this respect, Kad Kong Kao prioritises community benefit over that of private sector's profits. While linking tourism to community development often compels community members to become entrepreneurs burdened with managing financial solvency³⁸, Kad Kong Kao has eschewed this path by proceeding gradually and avoiding large-scale investments. Importantly, this approach leverages tourism as a tool for fostering community members' sense of belonging through the mobilisation of shared values and collective memory.

³⁸ See e.g., Rachel Dodds, Alisha Ali & Kelly Galaski, "Mobilizing knowledge: determining key elements for success and pitfalls in developing community-based tourism," *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, No.13 (2018), 1547-1568.

5.4 Core theme 3: Public sector-civil society partnership

This section will explicate the model of partnership between the state and civil society as a social innovation, emphasising the independent internal administration of Kad Kong Kao. It should also be noted that the engagement of civil society in public affairs yields numerous societal benefits, such as fostering a sense of belonging, cultivating volunteerism in younger generations, and enhancing intra- and inter-community trust, thereby building social capital.

The case of Kad Kong Kao demonstrates that the “Active Generation of Phrae Family,” a civil society actor, initiated and propelled the market, with government agencies playing a minimal supportive role. The decision-making processes and community development directions remain with the market management team, whose members are selected from within, without oversight or appointed advisors from central or local government. To illustrate this point, it is important to look at the operation of Kad Kong Kao.

Initially, the management of Kad Kong Kao involved joint consultation between representatives from the ‘Active Generation of Phrae Family’ and local community members. During this time, there was no clear formal working committee structure. Management relied on joint discussions, shared governance approaches, and the established seniority of the community leader. Later, after the implementation of Kad Kong Kao initiative, internal and external factors periodically necessitated problem-solving. This led to the establishment of informal working divisions. Responsibilities for managing specific areas were assigned

based on residents' neighborhoods, group leaders were appointed to oversee their designated vendors, and various rules and regulations were established for vendors and tourists to ensure more efficient area management. Ultimately, as the market gained wider recognition and attracted more tourists, the working group had to adapt by formalising its structure and establishing a Market Management Committee who would liaise with governmental agencies.

Overall, civil society stakeholders are entrusted with the internal governance of the market, including assuming responsibility for operation management and facilitating mutual aid and service provision among members. Complementing this, the Kad Kong Kao management team is responsible for supplying essential infrastructure, specifically preparing facilities, certain necessary equipment, and storage spaces for the vendors. Crucially, the genesis of the 'old town' tourism initiatives and associated cultural events demonstrates a predominantly bottom-up approach. Local residents actively initiate and lead these endeavours. The public sector's role is largely supplementary. The Phrae Town Municipality, for example, is only involved in the standard municipal functions, such as waste management and responding to specific support requests. Similarly, the local branch of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) provides ad hoc assistance for select events. Accordingly, the Kad Kong Kao administration functions as a partner to governmental agencies, collaboratively negotiating the parameters of interaction to ensure the space for cooperation is both viable and suitable for achieving local community objectives.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This section discusses the findings in the context of grassroots social innovation and citizen-driven community development. Three learning points are underscored namely active participation of local stakeholders, innovative mechanisms and models in the collaborative management of Kad Kong Kao, and the challenges concerning the sustainability of Kad Kong Kao. The concluding remarks briefly reflect on the direction of the future development of Kad Kong Kao.

6.1 Active participation of local stakeholders

The genesis of Kad Kong Kao is attributable to a consortium of local civil society networks. Two main groups are “the Active Generation of Phrae Family” and “the Phrae Local Architectural Conservation Club”. They were the principal catalysts for the initiative’s conceptualisation, implementation, and expansion. Initial support for its operations was procured in 2010 from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. It should be noted that, by 2020, the initiative had marked its 10th anniversary, having achieved fiscal self-sufficiency. A formal management team has since been instituted, and the project continues to evince adaptability through modifications to its administrative approach, such as the proscription of plastic bags and the reconfiguration of assembly areas. Moreover, talented individuals from both inside and outside the community have been constantly invited to provide new ideas and tools for its continued improvement.

The execution of Kad Kong Kao contributes to the revitalisation of a historic old town suffering from commercial stagnation and the

progressive dereliction of abandoned architectural heritage. This physical decay was compounded by shifting relational dynamics, precipitated by the emigration of the local population to Bangkok or other larger provinces that offer more job opportunities. In this context, the establishment of Kad Kong Kao presented an innovative solution to the intertwined problems of physical dereliction and aging population in the 'old town' community. Its existence has thus facilitated the reclamation and reuse of erstwhile-abandoned buildings and houses. Concurrently, it has provided a space for local community members to forge and reinforce relationships with external vendors while galvanising their own internal social cohesion. This dynamic highlights the Kad Kong Kao initiative's core feature as a form of social innovation. It is defined by a strong, voluntary mobilisation that relies, to a considerable degree, upon spontaneous community gathering and maintains a degree of autonomy from government control and financial dependence.

Furthermore, Kad Kong Kao exemplifies a processual, community-level innovation that redresses local predicaments through an approach conceived by, executed for, and beneficial to the community itself. It also illustrates how a community can lead its own growth by strategically connecting different groups of stakeholders and turning local intellectual and cultural assets into economic opportunities. This underscores the proactive civic spirit of the area, where active voluntary associations have become the engine for community advancement, fostering a profound sense of collective responsibility and engendering a dual-value creation that is both social and economic in its dimensions.

6.2 Innovative mechanisms and models in the collaborative management of Kad Kong Kao

The case of Kad Kong Kao reveals an innovative model of 2 mechanisms and 3 phases. The 2 mechanisms refer to the mechanism for brainstorming and ideation, and the mechanism for activity implementation. The 3 phases refer to the temporal framework of the operation: 1) the initial phase of ideation and community consultation; 2) the early implementation phase; and 3) the phase of established recognition, increased tourism, and greater government participation.

The mechanism for brainstorming and ideation, as previously discussed, was primarily driven by the “Active Generation of Phrae Family.” This group is responsible for generating ideas, providing recommendations, setting directions, and building networks. In other words, this mechanism facilitates a consultative network, which in turn stimulates group learning, procures internal and external networks, and performs a matching function between development needs and requisite resources.

The subsequent mechanism involves the participatory implementation of activities, adhering to agreed-upon operational guidelines and regulations established by consensus between the management team and community vendors. In addition, the continuity of ‘Kad Kong Kao’ grassroots initiative can be attributed to the following supporting factors:

- **Shared goals and visions:** The team and the project’s originators share a common understanding of the necessity

for community development based on local resources, knowledge, beliefs, and strengths, ensuring a unified direction.

- **Driving momentum:** The key actors have not abandoned their creative efforts. Their strong commitment to clear goals enables them to effectively utilise inputs for development.
- **A dedicated, local management team:** This contrasts with many state-initiated projects led by officials who may lack contextual understanding and sense of belonging. The “by the local people, for the local people” nature of the Kad Kong Kao management team fosters a sense of pride, protectiveness, and a desire for continuous improvement.
- **Diverse partnerships:** A network of partners from the private sector, civil society, and state agencies provides support based on their respective capacities. The strength of the management team ensures that these partnerships are complementary and do not interfere with its work.

It should also be noted that network coordination within civil society is horizontal and flexible, adapting to the community’s changing conditions. Besides, the researcher finds that this grassroots innovation allows community development to meet the needs of both internal and external stakeholders because its management is generally based on regular, informal consultations. Concurrently, it selectively leverages government projects as deemed appropriate. In this sense, the management of Kad Kong Kao is autonomous, capable of forging partnerships with state

agencies rather than being dependent on them. A clear example is the management team's constant emphasis on self-reliance to avoid the delays and bureaucracy inherent in state-funded support procedures.

Another point worthy of reflection is an evaluation of Kad Kong Kao's performance and success. It can be approached from multiple perspectives, as its existence has simultaneously precipitated progressive change and preserved memory.

First, the progressive change that has occurred is significant. Kad Kong Kao, whether intentionally or not, has established itself as a major tourist destination in Phrae, bringing in sizeable visitors, stimulating local spending, and fostering non-obtrusive local development. This has catalysed broader urban-level economic improvements, created supplementary employment, and mobilised resources for the ongoing development of adjacent areas. The continued existence of Kad Kong Kao is, therefore, an important factor in the development and conservation of Phrae's old town.

Second, the preservation of memory is a key outcome. Interviews with the core group of Kad Kong Kao originators reveal a concerted effort to preserve both the living memories and the architectural heritage of the area. This is not an attempt to freeze memory or preserve abandoned structures, but rather to create a space where historical memory can circulate among residents and visitors through informal interactions - conversations during commerce, strolls past old houses, the consumption of local cuisine. It also involves the conservation of architecture through active use, such as exhibitions or cafes that retain the

original structure. These elements constitute the fabric of the old town's development and conservation, with Kad Kong Kao being a crucial jigsaw piece. Ultimately, a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative's success necessitates a macro-level consideration of the city, its spaces, lifestyles, and evolving economic factors. It is no exaggeration to state that Kad Kong Kao is a small nexus of development that has catalysed significant change in the broader context of Phrae.

6.3 Challenges

A set of problems agreed upon by the stakeholders concerns intergenerational succession. The members of Kad Kong Kao management team and “Active Generation of Phrae Family” are predominantly middle-aged or elderly. There is thus apprehension about how to connect with the younger generation to ensure they will carry on the legacy of Kad Kong Kao, particularly its cultural heritage and collective memory. Through observation, the researcher notes that the younger generation in Phrae is quite active. For instance, the young entrepreneurs behind the “Phrae Craft (แพรว์คราฟท์)” event and the “YEC Phrae” (Young Entrepreneurs Chamber of Commerce) have been involved in some cultural events. The major challenge, therefore, lies in fostering communication and coordination between the established networks and these nascent groups of young people.

6.4 Concluding remarks

The Kad Kong Kao initiative serves as a compelling case study of grassroots social innovation. This study demonstrates the strategic use of tourism not as an end in itself, but as a means to foster

inclusive community-building. However, sustaining this developmental momentum proves challenging. The triple challenges the Kad Kong Kao management team face are the recruitment of new changemakers to drive new initiatives, the renewal of the existing partnership to ensure meaningful collaboration in old town revitalisation, and the revision of previously successful events and activities to draw lessons learned for future steps.

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