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Future Thailand: Rural Society

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Abstract

This paper is from the research project entitled, "Future Thailand: Rural Society" which had three main objectives: 1) To study the conditions of rural society in the past and in the future; 2) to create scenarios regarding rural society that could potentially occur in the future and examine the risks that could arise within each scenario; and 3) to suggest appropriate policy to accommodate future potential changes and mitigate possible risks. Rural society is divided into four elements: Traditional Community, Hybrid Rural Community, Semi-Urban Community, and Government-Led Development Area. The research also studies the impacts from various factors on social quality, which consists of socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion, and social empowerment. Five data collection methods were used: in-depth interviews with experts, rapid rural appraisal assessment (RRA), review of literature and related theoretical concepts, collection of statistical data, and group discussions and workshops. To project the scenarios and plan for desired future scenarios, a foresight study and deep casual layered analysis were conducted to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data, and to conduct content analysis and simulation. The results of the study show that since 1957, the context of rural society has changed continuously in terms of social and economic structures, cultural aspects, population, and ecology. Regarding social and economic structure, economic development and

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industrial investment resulted in changes in the production plan and involved a transition from traditional self-sufficient production to economical production. Culture and the values of motherhood have shifted such that rural families now tend to have fewer children than in the past and the family size has shrunk. Four future scenarios are developed from analysing four types of rural society: peaceful and happy society, sustainable and balanced society, mixed society, and unhappy society. To establish a sustainable and balanced society according to the preferable scenarios, the research team has recommended that there should be a direction outline for Thailand future development and that national development should be driven from the bottom level. An appropriate economic, social, and political context should be created to facilitate the transition process for achieving a balanced and sustainable society.

Keywords: Future Thailand, rural society, social quality, scenarios, sustainable society, community

Introduction

Rural societies, economies and areas face challenges and opportunities that can be qualitatively different from their urban analogues, including limited access to infrastructure, services and political decision-making and greater exposure to some kinds of environmental shocks and stresses. Rural society of Thailand has also been acing far-reaching changes, especially after the introduction of the National Social and Economic Development plan in 1961. With the changes of demographic structure, the migration of the rural people into the cities, the changes of land utilization, economics, environment, politics and culture significantly lead to the societal structural changes. The rapid advancement of technology also brings about the rural people behavioural changes. These dynamics of changes are according to many internal and external factors. So far, Thailand has mostly focused on the development of physical structure especially, the infrastructure and contributed a great deal to the better quality of life of the rural people. However, the unpreferable issues, such as economic and social inequality in the rural society still exist. In addition, the global trend also shows a lot of signals that may affect the rural area such as the pandemics, the climate changes and the economic recession. Not only internal factors that affect the rural Thai society, but the external factors are also crucial ones.

Some risks occur to the rural area from time to time. Some impacts cannot be easily controlled. The concentration of quality of life of the people may not be enough to create the immunity for help manage the uncertainties. The study of how rural Thailand can sustainably achieve the social quality that includes socio economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment (Bureekul, 2010 and Bureekul & Sangmahamad, 2018). is necessary. Many possible rural futures can be envisaged, each carrying implications for local livelihoods, poverty and social relations, conflict, migration, production and distribution systems, food security, natural

resource management and environmental change. The systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures of rural Thailand may help understand these changes and help shape desired futures.

Objectives

This paper is derived from the King Prajadhipok's Institute research project entitled, 'Future Thailand: Rural Society' which looks at the next 5-20 years in the future. The research has three main objectives: 1) To study the condition of rural society in the past and in the future; 2) To create scenarios for rural society that could potentially occur in the future and examine the risks that could arise within each scenario; and 3) To suggest appropriate policy to accommodate future potential changes and mitigate possible risks.

Literature Review

Futures studies is the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future. It has moved from focusing on the external objective world to a layered approach wherein how one sees the world actually shapes the future one sees (Inayatullah 2002). Futures studies is also an umbrella term describing different methods of systematically exploring the future and trying to understand possible future developments and variables. The main purpose of futures studies is to investigate trends and potential discontinuities and to inform decision makers. Duin (2006) claims the use of futures studies will enable decision making for the longer term based on the possible trends of developments concerning economic, technological, social and political aspects. (Eriksson and Simme, 2020). It is what people can change and decide for their own future (Bell, 1996).

During this period, futures studies has moved from focusing on the external objective world to a layered approach wherein how one sees the world actually shapes the future one sees (Inayatullah 2002). For studying the future, the Six Pillars approach has been mentioned by Inayatullah (2013). The first pillar is "Mapping the future," with its primary method being the futures triangle The second pillar is "Anticipating the future" with emerging issues analysis as the focal methodology. The third pillar is "Timing the future," with micro-, meso- and macro history being the most useful "methods." The fourth pillar is "Deepening the future" with causal layered analysis being the foundation (even though causal layered analysis is a theory of futures studies as well). The fifth pillar is "Creating alternatives" with scenario planning being the most important method. The last pillar, "Transforming the future," has visioning and backcasting as its most important methods.

Social Change

Society is like a human body. Each part is like an organ. Individual parts can't survive on their own. Emile Durkheim, a major leader in the social sciences, believed that all parts of a society must be harmonious. Societies that don't adapt fast enough will fall behind. Societies have changed all the time and there are many types of changes such as planned and unplanned changes, expectation and in expectation changes. The factors for these changes are behavior, value, perception, culture and structure of

those in the societies. For social structure, the structure grows incrementally, as does any organic entity. New relations are generated by new births, and the society develops by accretion. There may be revolutions or other social convulsions that fracture the structure, but these are the fractures of an organic entity. (Bourdieu, P. and Coleman, J. (2019); Niratorn (2018)). According to Durkheim, the population density and growth are also the key factors in the evolution of the societies and advent of modernity. As the number of people in a given area increase, so does the number of interactions, and the society becomes more complex. rowing competition between the more numerous people also leads to further division of labour.(Allen, 2005).

For the Growth model, Rostow's Stages of Growth model (Binn, 2008 and Jacob, 2515, 2020) is one of the most influential development theories of the twentieth century.‰ Rostow penned his classic Stages of Economic Growth in 1960, which presented five steps through which all countries must pass to become developed: 1) traditional society, 2) preconditions to take-off, 3) take-off, 4) drive to maturity and 5) age of high mass consumption. The model asserted that all countries exist somewhere on this linear spectrum, and climb upward through each stage in the development process. Rostow's principal argument is that some places have progressed further than others in terms of economic development (as represented by the map of GNP). Rostow believes that poorer places are in an initial or beginning stage of development, while countries with higher levels of GNP are in a later stage of higher development. All places, therefore, are at some stage in a development sequence. These stages suggest that a society moves from a traditional phase which is characterized by a lack of exposure to Western society, a lack of science or technology, a dependence on agriculture, and a high level of poverty to a modernized, industrialized, and developed economy. Rostow argues that through increased investment, increased exposure to modernized, Western society, and changes in traditional culture and values, societies will become more highly developed.

Social Quality

Social quality is a comprehensive conception of the quality of people's daily lives. It is a function of the constant tension between individual self-realization and participation in the various collective identities that constitute everyday life. It is the extent to which people are able to participate in the social and economic life and development of their communities under conditions which enhance their wellbeing and individual potential. Social quality is proposed as a goal not only of social policy but of economic, environmental and other relevant policies. (Beck and Van de Mason, 2001). The 4 dimensions of social quality are 1) socio-economic security, the extent to which people have resources overtime 2) Social inclusion, the extent to which people have access to and are integrated into, the various institutions and social relations that constitute everyday life 3) social cohesion, the extent that social relations, values and norms are shared and accepted collectively 4) social empowerment, the ability to act and interact in the content of social relations in various domains. It is the extent to which

the personal capabilities of individual people and their ability to act are enhanced by social relations.

For the state of Social Quality in Thailand, Bureekul's study shows that although Thailand is strong in health care assurance policy but the social economic security still needs improving especially the accessibility to health services and income distribution. For social inclusion, Thais show low level of trust on individual but quite high trust on specific institutions esp. religious organization and courts. On social inclusion, the Thais feel being discriminated according to social status esp. education and employment. Moreover, the social empowerment, the Thais hope for the brighter future but are still afraid of being taken advantages. This is according to the low level of social cohesion and accessibility to government information.

Community Economy and Permaculture

For using community to modify economy, community may itself be a mode and form of economy distinct from other modes and forms (e.g., capitalist economy, slave economy, or household economy). To differentiate it from other economies, community economy is a set of economic practices that explicitly foregrounds community and environmental wellbeing. Indeed, from a community economy perspective, such wellbeing is the purpose rather than the hoped for and, at best, secondary outcome of economy (Gibson-Graham 2006). Community Economy (Tacha-atik, 2018) is related to the sufficiency economy which leads to sustainability of community. The components of sustainable community are capability in self-reliance, self-health care , engagement in community problems solving, community natural resource and environment management, tradition and culture management, appropriate technology application. While the use of the term community in economic geography is diverse, it most often suggests a set of relations embedded in a particular place that either shape or are shaped by economic practices (Amin and Roberts 2008). community can be other than commonality; it can also be an acknowledgement and practice of "being in common"—that understanding of the individual not as a singularity but as always being with others.

Permaculture is a design concept for sustainable, food producing landscapes mimicking the diversity and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive systems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of the landscape with people providing their food, energy, shelter and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way (Bell, 2005). It is a set of techniques and principles for designing sustainable human settlements. It is the careful design of relationships and interconnections among many factors– that will create a healthy, sustainable whole (Hemenway, 2001). A permaculture system is a system that resembles nature and is based on natural cycles and ecosystems (Holzer, 2004). Therefore, permaculture design is essentially a multi-faceted, integrated and ecologically harmonious method of designing human-centered landscapes. It is able to supply many of the needs of a human family or community within its localized environment

in as efficient and sustainable a manner as possible.

Decentralization

Decentralization is a global phenomenon (Suwanmala & Weist, 2009). The concept of decentralization refers to decentralized, directed from center to periphery, organized around and such. This concept, expressed as the transfer of authority from the center to subordinate ends, is important both for more effective and productive management of the areas outside the center organization in public administration and for strengthening these areas in terms of democracy conception (Ozmen, A. , 2014). Decentralization can be defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector (Rondinelli, 1999: 2). In the classical sense, this concept, which refers to the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources from central government to local governments, has a decisive role in central government local government relations (Eryılmaz, 2011: 103). Several definitions have been offered for decentralization. One of the most general defines it as the transfer of responsibilities and authority from higher to lower levels of government. Decentralization seeks to create relationships of accountability among citizens, service providers, and subnational governments and between the local and central governments. Suwanmala and Weist (2009) point out that decentralization should include three components: a clear division of responsibilities (who does what), adequate financing, and a clear accountability system.

Methodology

For this study, rural society is divided into four elements:

1. Traditional Community: Society with a mode of production focused primarily on agriculture. These groups continue to use traditional cultivation and have experienced few changes and little development. These groups continue to preserve traditional modes of production and follow an agricultural lifestyle.

2. Hybrid Rural Community: Society with a mixed structure including both agricultural modes of production, service economy, and tourism with some economic development. In this society, the mode of production and traditional lifestyle tend to be diluted.

3. Semi-Urban Community: Society located not far from urban areas. This type of society is more economically dependent on the urban than the rural economy. There is development and public infrastructure similar to that of urban areas. These societies are transforming to become urban areas.

4. Government-led Development Area: Society with a development plan and policies from the government. There are large development plans, special economic areas, industrial estates, and high-speed tracks.

The study of changes in rural society in the future divided into four periods: 1) 5-year period (2019-2024); 2) 10-year period (2024-2029); 3) 15-year period (2029-2034); and 4) 20-year period (2034-2039).

The factors affecting the quality of rural society can be divided into three categories according to the analysis of impacts of changes on the quality of rural society, namely the context of rural society, internal factors, and external factors.

The context of rural society consists of: 1) Social and economic structural variables; 2) cultural change variables; 3) population variables; and 4) ecological variables. The internal factor category consists of: 1) Political variables; 2) 20-year national strategy variables; 3) constitutional variables of the Kingdom of Thailand; 4) reform plan variables; 5) national economic and social development plan variables; and 6) various government policies. The external factors consist of: 1) Variables of globalization; 2) variables of global climate change; 3) variables of the COVID-19 pandemic; 4) variables of changes in world order, global politics, the global economy, and society; and 5) variables of technology and digital transformation.

All three factors were used to analyse the impacts on the social quality of local rural society. Social quality can be divided into four areas: Socio-economic security; social cohesion; social inclusion; and social empowerment. These were used to analyze social quality change and create a landscape scenario for future planning in the next 5-20 years.

Five data collection methods were used: 1) In-depth Interviews with experts; 2) rapid rural appraisal assessment (RRA); 3) review of literature and related theoretical concepts; 4) collection of statistical data; and 5) group discussion and workshop.

For the in-depth interviews, the research team interviewed 32 experts from various sectors, including academia, politics, civil society, NGOs, villagers, private sector, senior executives, religious leaders, media, and youths. In addition, the rapid rural appraisal (RRA) was used to study the four types of rural society in four regions of the country, dividing it into 16 areas and information was collected from 192 people. The data collection consisted of:

1st type of rural society: 1) Banmaekopee, Khun Yuam District, MaeHong Son; 2) Ban Pha Tang, Pong District, Phayao; 3) Ban Choeng Doi, Kut Bak District, Sakon Nakhon; and 4) Khao Phra community, Rattaphum District, Songkhla.

2nd type of rural society: 1) KohKerd Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Bang Pa-in District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya; 2) Bangrieang Community, Khuan Niang District, Songkhla; 3) Mae Chawa, Mae Chai District, Phayao; and 4) Ban HongSim, Phu Pan District, Sakon Nakhon.

3rd type of rural society: 1) Ban Tard, Chiang Kham District, Phayao; 2) Ban Chiang Khruea, Sakhon Nakhon; 3) Khuan Lang Community, Hat Yai District, Songkhla; and 4) Bangnomko Subdistrict Municipality, Sena District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya.

4th type of rural society: 1) Ban Nongwang Khon Kaen; 2) Taling Chan community, Chana District, Songkhla; 3) Yothaka community, Bang Nam Priao District, Chachoengsao; and 4) Bang Ban District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya.

To project the scenarios and plan for desired future scenarios, a foresight study and deep casual layered analysis was conducted to analyze both qualitative and

quantitative data and conduct content analysis and simulation.

The foresight study model consisted of seven steps:

1. Mapping: Collection of past, present, and future information with different tools.

2. Model Development: Study of the relationship between variables through system dynamics theory and creating a causal loop diagram.

3. Anticipating: The future was forecast through various methods such as problem analysis.

4. Timing: Predicting when situations could occur in the future.

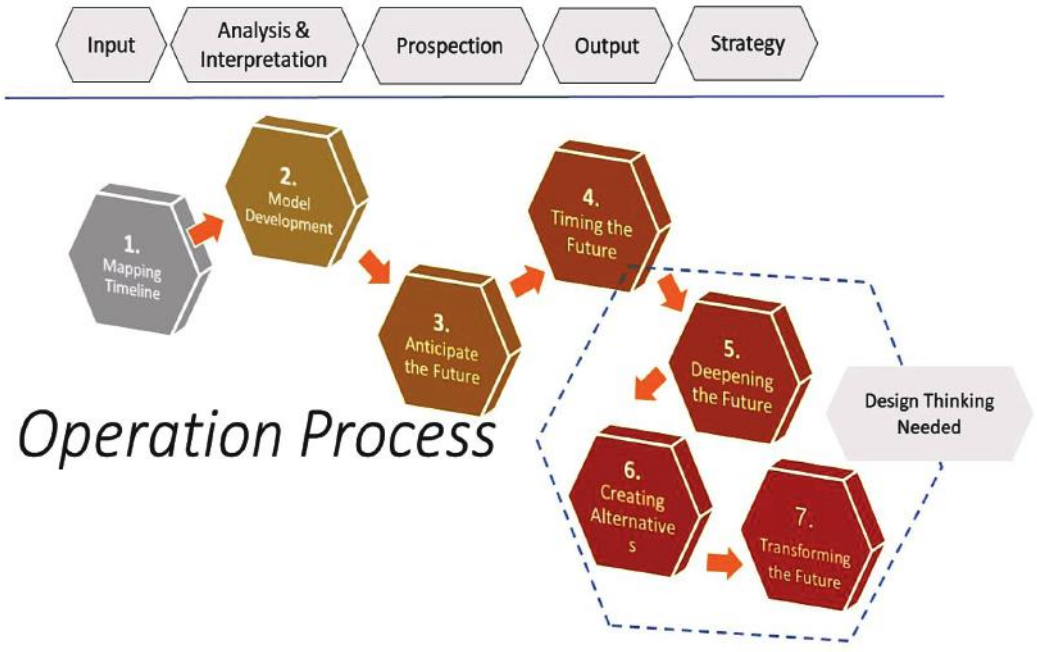
5. Deepening: In-depth study using foresight methodology that can be applied in many situations (causal layered analysis).

6. Creating Alternatives: Creation of options for the future.

7. Transforming: Explored the future through the past landscape of Thai politics and government. How the future should be adjusted to present challenges and in what ways situations should be managed to prevent future risks.

The deep casual layered analysis (DCLA) process which the research team developed from the casual layered analysis (CLA) which is a technique used in strategic planning, futures studies and foresight to more effectively shape the future. The technique was pioneered by Inayatullah, (2014) futures studies researcher. Causal layered analysis works by identifying many different levels, and attempting to make synchronized changes at all levels to create a coherent new future. For this study the DLCA consisted of ten elements: 1) Present; 2) Problems; 3) Causes; 4) Discourse/ Worldviews; 5) Myth/Metaphor; 6) Risks; 7) Desired Future; 8) Scenarios/ Choices; 9) Pros and Cons; and 10) Desired Policies.

Figure 1
Operation Process



Findings

Since 1957, the context of rural society has changed continuously in terms of social and economic structures, cultural aspects, population, and ecology. The following section summarizes the various changes which have occurred.

Social and economic structure

Since the first economic development plan was primarily aimed at economic development and growth to spread prosperity to other areas, this involved development of infrastructure and public utilities. Priority was given to economic development and industrial investment which resulted in changes in the production plan, and involved a transition from traditional self-sufficient production to economical production. Consequently, the income of rural individuals increased and the number of people earning incomes below the poverty line decreased. Nonetheless, expenses and debt problems continued to increase. To change the production plan, it was necessary to use more technology and chemicals while the need for household labour decreased. The birth rate also fell resulting in smaller family sizes. The younger generation is more highly educated and their values and intended career paths have also changed to focus on the service and industrial sectors, resulting in a shortage of agricultural workers. Subsequently, the majority of labour in rural areas consist of older individuals, mostly the elderly.

The production pattern changes have affected the natural environment and soil fertility in some locations has fallen. Rural households depend on their natural environment as a food source, yet economic exploitation of agricultural production has damaged the environment, making rural people no longer able to depend on their natural environment. Instead, rural people rely on urban means of sustenance.

Culture

In the process of rural development and change, the values of motherhood have shifted, in which rural families now tend to have fewer children and the family size has shrunk. The new generation values working in the city, and as parents migrate to the service and industries sectors in urban areas, the elderly members of rural communities are required to care for the children. In addition, older individuals also account for most of the workforce in rural areas. Subsequently, family structures have become more fragile and weaker. For religious institutions, it is found that there has been an increase in the tendency for temples to be left empty without religious practice, while rural people are now less likely to be ordained in the village temple and local religious practices and traditions have begun to fade as rural people become more materialistic.

Internal factors

The internal factors that affect social quality include political factors, state policy, national strategy, the national constitution, national reform plan, and the National Economic and Social Development Plan. These factors have also affected the quality of rural society.

The important political factors are political movements behind different ideologies which influence the beliefs and ideology of rural people, creating community polarization and divisions which

limit cooperation and can result in conflict at the family level.

The state policies that have significant impacted rural people include populist policies which shifted rural attitudes and values from originally being focused on self-reliance and self-management to reliance on state aid.

In terms of national strategy, several measures were implemented to strengthen rural communities to improve economic and social quality. However, there is a risk that national strategic has been unable to implement as the main mechanism relies on the public. These include bureaucratic factors, in which the target population had no sense of ownership or participation with the strategy. If the state could adjust its ideas and seek to work cooperatively, the national strategy would benefit and result in better social quality in rural communities.

Factors of the national constitution resulted in some positive effects on the quality of society but this has not yet been thoroughly covered. In particular, the national constitution has helped to strengthen the community's role in environmental management, such as forest management based on community rights. Many rural communities actively participate and feel ownership of natural resources. If the state can open wider opportunities, it will result in social cohesion, social inclusion, and social empowerment.

The National Reform Plan has similar risks as the national strategic factor. It is operated solely by the state and people have a limited role and are simply receivers of any benefits. If community participation is allowed and people can develop a sense of ownership, the quality of rural society would improve.

The past national economic and social development plan affected the economic quality of rural people since it improved infrastructure and public services. Nonetheless, negative impacts were also caused which decreased social quality.

External factors

External factors include global climate change, technological change and digital transformation, and globalization. Although this factor is derived from the outside the state, it still affects the quality of rural society. In particular, global climate change impacts agricultural production, decreases production, affects prices and reduces income stability, and has resulted in value changes among young workers who are no longer interested in working in the agricultural sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the national and global economies. Employment rates in the service and industrial sectors have fallen, resulting in significant numbers of people to return to rural area. Rural area has therefore become places to accommodate the burden of the pandemic.

With relation to global economics and political movements, trade treaties and agreements on the exchange of goods such as tariff arrangements and the contract farming have affected the socio-economic quality of rural areas. For instance, agricultural product imports have resulted in falling prices of similar goods produced in Thailand and an oversupply of goods in the market. There is a monopoly of seeds and mode of production, which have raised production costs for rural farmers, such as the introduction of smart

farm systems causing an inequality gap between different types of farmers, particularly between those with access to capital and those without such access. People will become more highly dependent on technology, resulting in higher capital costs of production. Furthermore, since most agricultural sector workers are elderly, they are unable to keep pace with advances technologies.

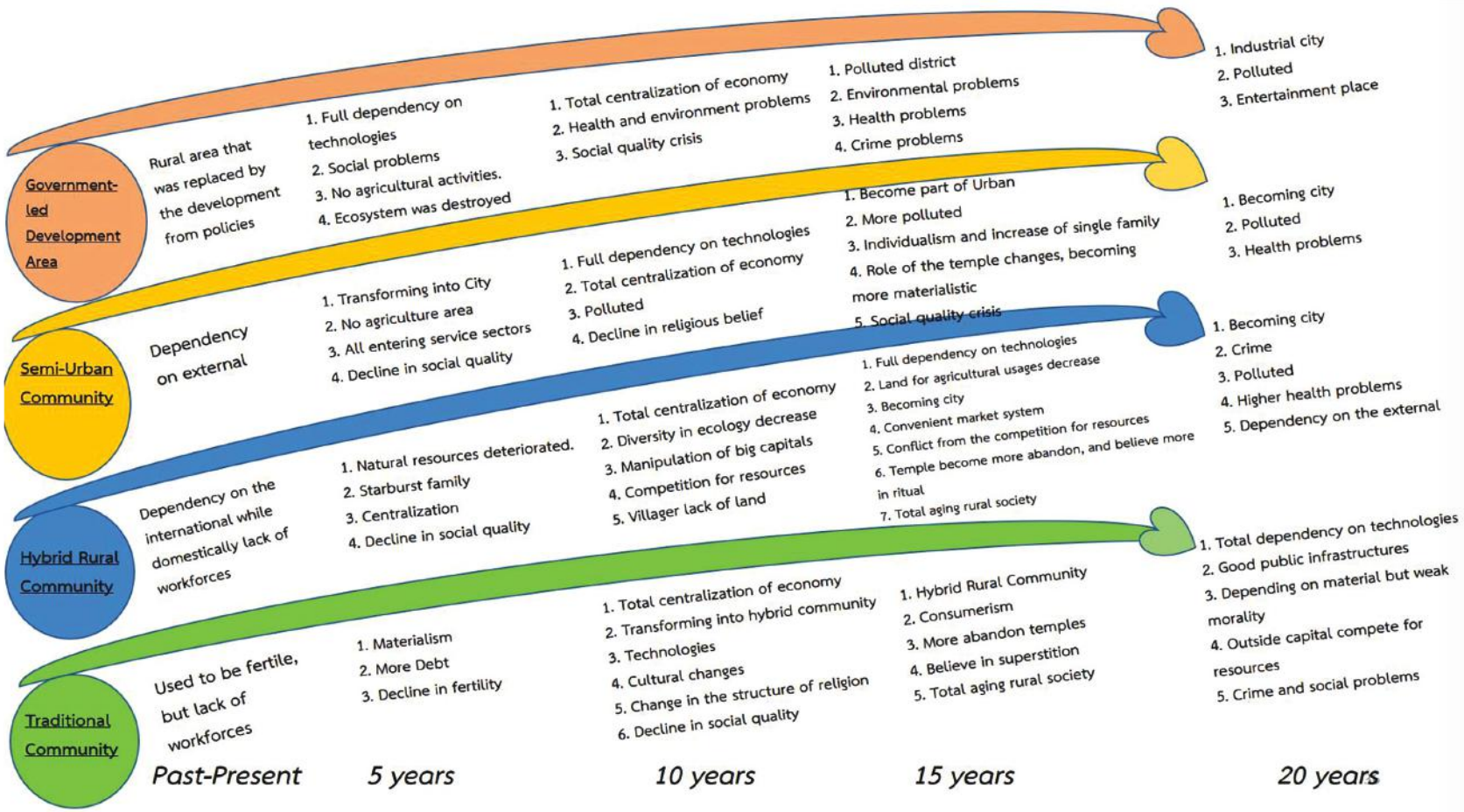
Although the spread of technology has resulted in positive impacts in terms of sharing and communication information quickly and widely, it has also resulted in a number of negative impacts. For instance, extreme beliefs in political ideologies, causing political polarization and conflicts in the community. Fast and convenient communication have also resulted in a reduction of face-to-face interactions within the rural community and reduced family and migrant workers' relationships and ties with communities.

The final external factors are globalization, which has affected the quality of rural society through the dominance of capitalism, liberalism, and gender equality. The dominance of capitalism has affected the modes of production and the traditional rural economy, from an economy guided by a social system with social instituted support into a market-oriented rural economy. Consequently, rural people have become more materialistic. Capitalism also resulted in people becoming more distanced from rural culture and traditions. The younger generation seek to gain greater freedom of thought and expression. Despite the regulation being implement, the social norms of rural society have tended to decrease. Gender equality has helped increase the number of women gaining positions in different organizations and participation in politics.

Continuous national development has resulted in overall improvements among rural communities, with people now earning a larger income, yet socio-economic stability has decreased. Social quality has improved yet it is problematic. Positive consequences include infrastructure development and access to healthcare and education. The negative effects of development include health issues among rural people due to lifestyle changes, exposure to chemicals products, and issues from non-communicable diseases as a consequence of new lifestyle habits.

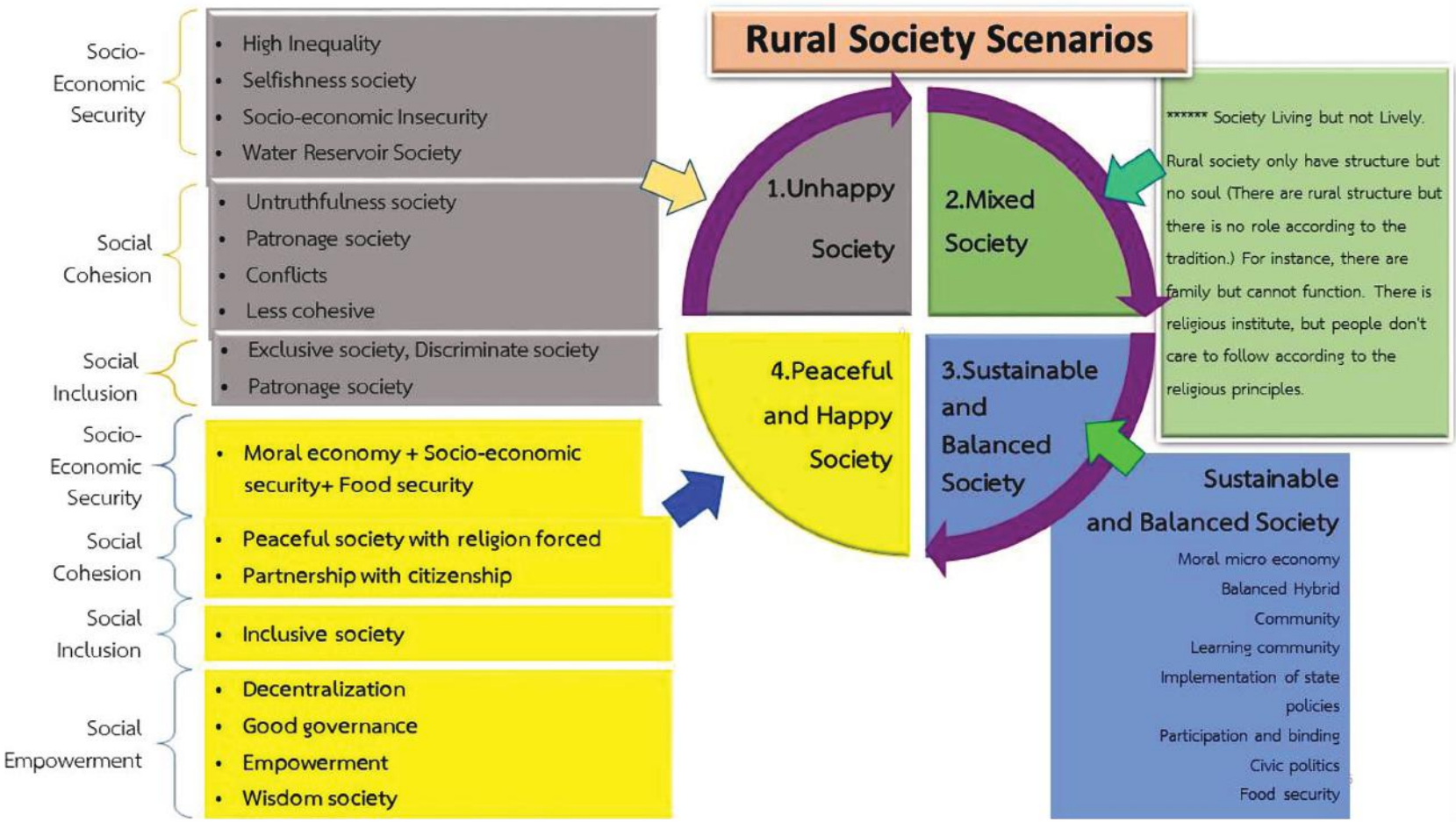
Further, changes in the structure and role of social institutions, such as families becoming smaller and unable to serve as an institution that previously shaped society in the past. For religious institutions, people are less dependent on the mind. Educational institutions are primarily responsible for producing a workforce for the service and industry sectors. Furthermore, despite greater association in groups, the objective for coming together was for economic benefit rather than community trust which has decreased. Conflicts within communities are likely increase as people compete for economic advantage. Cooperation and helping each other are values which are fading while participation and reconciliation are reducing. Learning for social empowerment in rural areas has not yet been fully developed. Therefore, regarding the impact of development on the social quality dimension, it can be said that development results in an improved economy yet lower quality of society.

Figure 2
Future Transformation Trend



These trends from the past to the present have been analysed to predict future possibilities. There are four future scenarios from analyzing four types of rural society: 1) Peaceful and happy society; 2) sustainable and balanced society; 3) mixed society; and 4) unhappy society, which are described as follows.

Figure 3
Future Scenarios which likely to happen



Unhappy Society

This is a society with high inequality. The society is deeply divided and polarized with ideological and generational gaps. People only concentrate on their own interests and are materialistic. The patronage system has an increased role in the society. It is a society with no social empowerment or economic and social security. There are interventions into rural areas and a water reservoir society, resulting in more debt crises among citizens. The rural area is utilized as a capital accumulation mechanism, while resources are removed from the area. The rural area will also be transformed to accommodate heavy industrial facilities such as power plants and large industrial estates. There is no advance planning to manage environmental impacts. Resources in the rural area will be used by the industrial sector. The people will rely on consumer goods from the city. It is a severely unbalanced society, especially if there is only consumption without production. There will be a risk of food insecurity. People will become more individualistic without paying attention to participative development. They will turn their back on social participation and philanthropy. Traditional culture will be almost erased as people in the rural areas gradually adopt an urban lifestyle. They will seek money and materialism regardless of their righteousness. Citizens will only wait for state assistance, creating a patronage-based society and leading to a society with a mafia system. There will be a decline in the sense of community as well as a shortage of natural resources. There will be resource, social, and health problems. Morbidity and mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) will increase. This is a low social quality society.

Mixed Society

This is a society that is left without any adaptation or changes. It is a society that is a consequence of present conditions without any changes, whether in terms of economics, politics, society, the environment, culture. At present, rural society members are beginning to have insufficient incomes, economic problems, and high levels of debt. Meanwhile, the agricultural labour force has decreased and there is a monopoly of big capital which has left many groups experience inequality and inadequate access to public services. This is a society in which power is centralized, and while large cities enjoy a healthy economy, rural societies are faced with poverty. Although some communities are well managed, self-serving patronage systems remain. Help and support for each other in the community exists at a certain level, yet self-centeredness will increase. In the future, a mixed society is one in which resources are still available but will be insufficient to support some communities, resulting in high resource competition in many areas.

In summary, a mixed society is where the state prioritizes the development of infrastructure. There is better transportation and good economic development, yet most people will not be able to access public services and instead experience a poor quality of life. Citizens will be in debt and lack career opportunities. A mixed society may have good access to good medical services at a global standard, yet people will continue to experience poor health due to low health literacy and insufficient incomes.

Families do not function entirely and there are religious institutions but few citizens adhere to the principles of religion. There are social institutions that work with people in society but there is low meaningful participation. This type of society may be considered to lack an economic structure.

Sustainable and Balanced Society

This is a society with an alternative economy system in addition to a parallel market economy. The alternative economic system is a moral micro economy. This is community micro economic system that functions on the basis of presence of morality, equality, and fairness between consumers and manufacturers with processes and mechanisms to ethically distribute goods and services. There is just price pricing as well as a learning community to seek intellectual immunity. People will be able to access and use information and knowledge to make decisions about future life plans. It is also a lifestyle that contributes to the strengthening of rural social institutions, restoring the natural environment, and adopting a sustainable culture (permaculture) that considers ethical development. This is focused on caring for the world and for other people along with sharing fairly. The community will focus on building natural and social capital rather than economic capital. They prioritize community economic development rather than profitable economic development. People will reduce their accumulation of capital and instead accumulate resources to create a natural balance. Their perspective on the world is as a living organic body (mother earth) with social integration and social empowerment. There will be a strong civic politics as well as mechanisms of social institutions, including local wisdom, providing both inside and outside knowledge in order to create economic growth both within communities and between networks. It also places greater emphasis on public participation and engagement in society rather than the importance of the individual pursuing economic profit from production. It emphasizes participation to protect rural society from capitalist domination and radical consumerism. People will make the countryside as a sustainable source of food security for the country.

Peaceful and Happy Society

A peaceful and happy society is having a moral economy and where there is equal economic resources allocation and a peaceful society. People in the community adhere to religious principles. Society is harmonious, united, and with strong bonds through social partnership between the state, private organizations, and the people. There will be decentralization of power to rural areas based on good governance principles. Society will focus on empowerment, education, and preservation of community culture, watersheds, and forest conservation, as well as competent management of natural resources. Land use for agricultural purposes will be balanced to establish sustainable food security. This society has less crime since everyone has a good quality of life. People will also have sufficient resources to sustain their life. This society is based on brotherhood society with a kingship relationship in which each individual supports one another.

In these four scenarios, the most desirable, feasible scenario which is suitable for Thai rural society is the sustainable and balanced society.

Discussion

The result of this study indicates the significant issues that are derived from national development. Younger generations in rural areas have become less interested in working in the agricultural sector, especially the new generation of work force aged between 15-24 years old. In 2012, the younger generation workforce accounted for approximately 4.2 percent of the country's workforce, while the workforce aged between 25-39 years accounted for 10.5 percent. Combining the two groups, they account for 14.7 percent of the national workforce. By 2031, this group of people will be 35-59 years old. The majority of the current population under the age of 15 will likely refuse to enter the agricultural sector at all, meaning that Thailand will only have about 15 percent of the workforce in the agricultural sector.

The new generation of workers tends to work in the service and industrial sectors while capitalism has resulted in the creation of a market economy in rural society. Rural society has transitioned to become a small family structure. Currently, Thailand's total fertility rate (TFR) is approximately 1.5, and if this continues for the next 10 to 20 years, for every two people there will be a population replacement of only 1.5 people, potentially resulting in a decline of the rural population over the next 10 to 20 years. One quarter of young people will grow up in a new environment where there may be little concern for local social quality. The new generation only focuses on earning money and accumulating wealth. Their behaviours shift to seek income rather than agriculture for economic stability. There will be growing conflict between different groups in the community. Trust in each other will decline, reflecting the weakening of the rural community institutions. Rural society will be unable to function and be less strong and supportive compared to the past. Meanwhile, with Thailand becoming an aging society, the demographic likelihood has become a new social problem for rural society, which will worsen over time. If this trend continues for another 20 years, rural societies may become unhappy or mixed societies, which are further explained below.

An unhappy society is an unbalanced society where there is severe inequality. People are in debt and unable to be self-sufficient. Concurrently, society has deep polarization and conflicts. People only look out for their own interests and seek materialism and money. The patronage system grows becomes highly important in the society. In addition, the resources in rural society are spent entirely on the industrial sector. People in rural areas are uninterested in agriculture and turn to industrial and service sectors instead, making rural areas prone to food shortages. There will be competition for resources and serious social issues. This is a society without socio-economic security.

The mixed society has the character of present-day society but which has been left to operate without any modification or change. It is a society that still has income inequality, but with accessible public services. In addition to access to educational

opportunities, and employment, there is an imbalance between urban-rural developments (e.g., greater access to rural society for the purpose of resource exploitation). Industrial agriculture and industrial crop are promoted, resulting in ecological and environmental damage. Rural people suffer from inequality, low income, and debt. Social institutions such as religious institutions, educational institutions, and the family institution are not fully functional, resulting in a reduction of social value practice.

Both of these societies affect the social quality of rural society in terms of socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion, and social empowerment. If this continues in the next 20 years, it is likely that a crisis will occur. At present, rural society is vulnerable to the risk of collapsing, and when the national-level economic and social conditions—particularly in the industrial and service sectors—is faced with unexpected future crises (e.g., pandemic, financial crisis, and natural disasters such as floods), many workers in the service and industrial sectors industries can still rely on rural areas as a safety net to accommodate them. Yet in the future if rural society gradually transforms into an unhappy or mixed society, the rural society may be unable to handle any future crises and will not be a source for creating wealth, stability, and sustainable development for the country. The primary mechanism to push for development will move to the city via the service and industrial sectors.

However, from the prediction of the future by projecting the future scenario, the researchers believe that there still a potential scenario that could be a possible solution to prevent or reduce the risk of an unhappy or mixed society. This is to find a way for rural society to become a balanced and sustainable society.

A sustainable and balanced society is characterized by a society with a moral micro economy, in which the community work under a sense of morality, equality, and fairness between consumers and manufacturers with processes and mechanisms to distribute goods and services based on ethics. This would include just pricing and learning community aiming for the intellectual immunity. People will be able to access and use information and knowledge to make decisions about future life plans. It is also a lifestyle that contributes to the strengthening of rural social institutions, restoring the natural environment, and adopting a sustainable culture (permaculture) that considers ethical development. They will focus on caring for the world and caring for people as well as sharing fairly. The community will focus on building natural and social capital rather than economic capital.

From the research, there are four reasons why a sustainable and balanced society is desirable and suitable for Thai society in the future.

1) Building socio-economic stability in Thailand must be done from the ground level. In a sense, rural society must become a society with economic and social stability.

2) A sustainable and balanced society has highly feasible approaches and measures if all sectors of society work together to drive policy and measures proposed by the research team. Importantly, these policy suggestion and measurements involve the

implementation of principles in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560, Chapter 6 on the Directive Principles of State Policies, Section 75. Section 75, which states that:

"The State should organize an economic system which provides opportunities for the people to all together benefit from the economic growth in a comprehensive, fair and sustainable manner and to be self-reliant in accordance with the philosophy of sufficiency economy, should eliminate unfair economic monopoly, and should develop economic competitiveness of the people and the country.

The State shall refrain from engagement in an enterprise in competition with the private sector, except in cases of necessity for the purpose of maintaining the security of the State, preserving common interests, providing public utilities or providing public services.

The State shall promote, support, protect and stabilize the system of various types of co-operatives, and small and medium enterprises of the people and communities.

In developing the country, the State should have due regard to the balance between the development of material and development of mind, as well as the well-being of the people."[1]

If considering the essence of the constitution in this section, it can be seen that a sustainable and balanced society includes elements according to the spirit of Article 75.

3) Policy suggestions and measures to encourage rural society into a sustainable and balanced society will lead to Thailand becoming stable, prosperous, and sustainable in line with the goals of the national strategy. The creation of stability, prosperity, and sustainability must start from the bottom of society, namely rural society. It can be said that the desirable scene and policy suggestion proposed by the research team are the guidelines that will drive Thai society to achieving the desired goals of the national strategy.

4) A sustainable and balanced society includes social elements in line with the royal initiative of His Majesty the King Bhumibol Adulyadej, which seeks for all Thai people and every organization and sector to adopt the sufficiency economy philosophy. This philosophy includes moderation, rationality, and immunity under the condition of knowledge and virtue. The desirable society proposed by the research team is the one that must adhere to these three principles.

The development of a sustainable and balanced society will accumulate wealth for the country as it makes rural society a base for food production. This type of prosperity is not merely concerned with economic wealth, but also the wealth of social and natural capital. The proposed measures, such as welfare for agricultural workers, will help ensure occupational security. In addition, in terms of stability, the suggested measures such as welfare for agriculture labour will strengthen career stability. Principles and approaches to agriculture under the concept of a sustainable and balanced society will be the building blocks of social stability, food security, and economic stability. This will further enhance the dignity of rural people

[1] 1 The Council of State, N.d., The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand

and also help the country pursue sustainable development. Careers and employment in rural areas will be restored and maintained in a sustainable environment. People can pass on their values and culture to the next generation as well as uphold the value of cultural heritage with pride in protecting and sustaining a balanced and sustainable society.

It also creates a society with social immunity, maintains food security, offers safe areas in crises, and benefits Thailand's long-term development.

Policy Recommendations

To create a sustainable and balanced society according to the presented sceneries, the research team has a recommendation for developing the country as follows:

1. Recommendation for outlining the direction of Thailand future development

The desired scenario is a sustainable and balanced society. This type of society is In line with the Sustainable Development Goals: (SDGs), which aims to enhance people's living standards.

Among the 17 development goals, there are goals, driven by the bottom level through local and rural community processes that is consistent with the scenery of the sustainable and balanced society. The said SDGs goals include 1) no poverty, 3) good health and well-being, 8) decent work and economic growth, 10) reduced inequalities 12) responsible consumption and production, 15) life and land, and 16) peace and justice strong institutions.

The approaches proposed by research teams in chapter 10, the alternatives to the future, and chapter 9 (section 9.4), guideline for risk reduction for a balanced and sustainability can be used as a conceptual framework for developing the future of Thailand through policy mechanism and practice as follows:

1) The guideline presented in this research can be of use for driving the national strategy in different areas and guiding the approaches toward the achievement of each strategy's objectives. The national strategy includes national security, human capital development and strengthening, and eco-friendly development and growth. As such, the process of bringing the strategy into actual implementation should prioritize the empowerment of the locality. Local must become the key player in driving the national strategy at the local community level by taking the goal and development guideline of social quality in 4 aspects.

2) The scenario of a sustainable and balanced society should be used to determine the framework and direction of the long-term national development for the next 20 years, both the national economic and social development plan and the national reform plan. It should prioritize the development of social quality in the rural. They might use the alternative approach to desired society as proposed in the research as a measurement, pushing for the development.

3) Other than plotting development and problem management strategy in the short term of 3-5 years, rural society in the long-term of 15-20 years should also be put into consideration when drafting the

provincial strategy. The image of rural society from different scenario proposed in this research can be used as data for analyzing the goal of long-term development. Its emphasis on the participation of the rural community in determining the development strategy, especially in the area of 4 areas of social quality.

2. Suggestion for the drive of national development from the bottom level

There should be a paradigm shift from bureaucratic mechanism to the bottom-up approach in driving the national strategy and national reform plan. The public sector should reduce its role from being the operators to supporter and facilitator to the community. In this regard, the bottom-up approach could use the guideline of the sustainable and balanced society as the action framework to achieve the desired society in the future. This desired society is aligning with the goals of SDGs and the principal SDGs which aiming for a bottom-up approach as well. More importantly, different sectors in a rural area such as community organizations, local government organizations, and other local institutions should play a significant role in implementing the national strategy, national reform plan, and SDGs.

3. Suggestion to create an economic, social, and political context to facilitate the transitioning to a balanced and sustainable society.

To drive the rural society to the desired scenario of the future, the economic, social, and political context of the country must be favorable. There needs to be an adaptation to facilitate and erase any hindrances that might prevent the empowerment of the rural community. At the policy level, there should be reforms as listed:

1) Reformation of the bureaucracy by emphasizing the role of the public sectors as the facilitators and supporters of civil society empowerment instead of the public sector as a role of policy-making mechanism.

2) Decentralize reformation by decentralizing authority, budget, resources, tax and local treasury system enough to suffice the local development according to the area-based principle. The local government organization should also increase their role in supplying the production factors such as agricultural machinery, promoting production to be part of the public service of the local governmental organization, and distribute the autonomy to the community, allowing them to make their own decision of public policy and development plan. This decentralizes reformation for the local community must design the new system of local government organization. The old mechanism of local government needs to be a shift to local governance where civil society has the authority to direct the local administration. As for the guideline of implementing the decentralized reform, it can be done as listed:

2.1) State must have a policy that encourages local government autonomy and strengthen fiscal and human resources management. It can create immunity from the changes caused by internal and external factors. A community can be self-reliant, achieve quality public services that meet with the standard quality, as well as promote the relationship between people, local

government organizations and various organization to create a joint sense of ownership. They can also have a transparent evaluation system and the ability to amend or revise the laws to support the local autonomy. There will be innovation in public service to meet the needs of local people.

2.2) They need to amend local laws, regulation of local governance, and community organization council act to enable mutual benefits and support. The local development plan should be initiate by the local community council and allow a citizen the right as well as the authority to formulate their public policy and hand those projects to the local government organization for implementation.

2.3) Fiscal should be decentralized to increase the budget allocation of the local government to appropriately suit the expend of each area and accommodate the mission implementation of each local government. There can be two sources of income: 1) from the central government; 2) local government self-earning. This is to improve the social quality and quality of life in the local community and increase the autonomy of locality to generate their income from the non-tax revenue. Each local will search for their potentiality, explore the need of their citizens, and provide a unique service model tailor to their local need such as income from fee, income from innovation development, income from promoting the community as a cultural attraction, income from high-quality agricultural products, wastewater treatment, waste management, etc.

2.4) There should be integrated development of both traditional development pattern, such as implementing central government's policies, and new development model which emphasizes the context and potential of each area. In addition, there should be a development in empowering the capability and strengthening the potential of the local to accommodate the future growth.

2.5) There should be a reform of the local government organizations by giving more autonomy in problem management and encouraging the development of local innovation. The local government organization should become a mechanism in allocating the basic services to the people such as education, public health, law amendment, and role of audit organization adjustment. They should prioritize implementing practical projects.

2.6) In the long run, apart from decentralizing autonomy to the local government organizations, there should be a decentralizing to the local community to create management that will suit each local context. There will be a synergy of various sectors such as governmental agencies at the regional level, private sectors, civil society, academic institutions and the public. It will emphasize the collaboration of network with interconnectedness as well as strategy implementation to achieve a participatory public policy process and decrease the centralized policy from the central government. Nonetheless, it depends on the will of the local people and the potential of the area. The development will happen according to the direction defined by people of all sectors. The development will be diverse and base on the participation of the people. When local can proceed and bring about changes, other areas can learn from

their conduct and continue to expand the process in a different area.

3) Welfare reformation and the stability of Thai's citizen livelihood, there should be a welfare system and social security for all Thai from the moment they were born to their death. Everyone will be guarantee economic stability, sufficient income, and sustainable life even after they are unable to work. Welfare reformation and stability can be done as listed:

3.1) Policy that supports the welfare for farmers to create stability and motivation for the younger generation to pursue a career in agriculture

3.1.1) Government organize welfare systems for farmers and funding for the farmers from different sources as a contribution as follows:

3.1.1.1) Income deduction from premiums and part of export tax of agricultural good for the farmers' funds. Government can also collect additional taxes from the agro-industrial entrepreneur as welfare for those working in the agricultural sector.

3.1.1.2) Allocating 0.1% of annual GDP from the agricultural sector into funding for farmers.

3.1.1.3) Use the said funding as the pension for farmers aged 60 years and over.

If Thailand has a welfare system for the farmer as mentioned, Thai farmers who mostly live in the rural area will have stable income after 60 where they are at the age of incapable of working like their younger self. This funding will help motivate the younger generation of the worker to be more interesting in pursuing a career in the agricultural sectors. It will reduce the economic inequality of the agricultural worker as well.

3.1.2) Government expand social security to cover all independent agricultural workers as an insured person as well as allow them the right to access the same protection and benefit as other types of an insured person.

3.2) Create economic stability by developing a saving system for all Thai by using a method of saving from spending:

3.2.1) There will be saving from every spending on VAT. Every time someone pay VAT, there will be a saving of 3% with the additional 2% from the government support. In total, for every spending on goods, there will be 5% saving for all Thai from the moment they were born to 60 years old. This saving will be transfer into the saving account of every taxpayer according to their identification number.

3.2.2.) The saving from the total VAT of the nation will be invest. The additional income will be accumulated back to the people.

3.2.3) When Thai citizen reaches 60 years old, the saving system will be a shift from the average earning into monthly earning as the elder allowance.

This system allows Thai citizen older than 60 years old to earn from saving. The amount of saving depends on the spending of each individual according to the said measure. This will help farmers in the rural area older than 60 years old to have enough income to continue their life.

4) There should not be any populist policy that encourages people dependent only on the state in the policy formulation by government and political parties. Those populist policies will create passive citizen, weakening Thai citizen and obstruct the empowerment of the self-management community. If those populist policies are to be implemented, they should be a populist policy that promotes the strengthening of citizenship and community. It should allow citizen to participate in the management and enhancing the social quality of the community such as social and cultural capital development fund and worker rehabilitation fund, etc.

Recommendation for further research studies

From this study, it was found that strengthening the rural and local societies of Thailand is necessary to accommodate the changes, especially the new way of living. As such, there should be further studies to increase knowledge, explore the drive for policy implementation, as well as enhancing various innovations for actual use in society to achieve stability, prosperity, and sustainability; it will create a quality society where the citizen will be able to enjoy good well-being. There are significant issues that should continue study: the study of the approach to strengthening the local rural society, the study of community self-management, a model of decentralization toward community, the strengthening of citizenship which enables the ability to take care of the society and adapt to the changing environment, and the study on improving regulations that are not conducive to decentralization, public participation in the process of public policy, as well as the study on enhancing participatory democratic value. These topics are all important to empower people, rural society and the local community to have self-immunity in the changing of circumstance. They will be able to solve the crisis through democratic methods as well as adapting the moral economy to their society with area-based development to strengthen the economic and social stability.

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Sustainable Future City Initiative as an Implementation Mechanism of Sustainable Urban Development

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Abstract

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) conducted "the Project for Promoting Sustainability in Future Cities of Thailand (TFCP)" from 2015 to 2021, under which Sustainable Future City Initiative (SFCI) was proposed as an implementation mechanism for sustainable urban development of local cities. SFCI introduced a national-government-guided and local-government-driven approach founded upon the following three principles: (i) local-driven development, where the local government should have the initiative to formulate its vision and strategies and propose projects to achieve its vision; (ii) people-centered development, where all planning processes should be done in a participatory approach in order to understand the actual issues and needs of stakeholders and to ensure the collaboration of such stakeholders in the implementation and operation stage; and (iii) national-government-guided and supported development, which connects the proposed plans and projects of the local government with the financial and institutional support of the national government in a way that currently does not exist in Thailand. After two phases of model city projects were conducted

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in altogether eight cities, key lessons have been extracted for tessaban (municipalities) to prepare comprehensive plans through participatory approaches and for national government to promote and support local cities' urban development in terms of budgeting and administrative coordination.

Keywords: Participatory approach, sustainable urban development, local administration, national urban polic

Introduction

Thailand has successfully achieved economic growth over the last several decades and has reached the status of an upper-middle-income country. However, its urban development trajectory has not always trodden an environment-friendly or sustainable path. While it is considered that climate change and greenhouse gas emission reduction shall be one of the most important policy issues from a global perspective and the standpoint of energy security, these must be considered in view of realizing a sustainable society.

Bangkok is the only metropolitan area in Thailand. With a population of 8.3 million, it accounts for about 35% of the country's urban population. The municipality with the second-largest population after the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is Nonthaburi, which has 256,000 residents and is located next to BMA. Thailand has 2,440 municipalities, called *tessaban* [the term is both plural and singular], and most have populations of less than 100,000. These municipalities face serious issues regarding infrastructure, living environment, industries, and jobs, as well as aging population, thereby necessitating a vision and a development plan.

Local cities in Thailand have two layers of administration, i.e., provincial administration and local administration. Provincial administration covers provinces headed by governors who are dispatched by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and includes field offices controlled by each central ministry. Local administration is comprised of local councils and chief executives or mayors directly elected by residents. Prior to 1999, local development was carried out under provincial administration, by field offices of central ministries. From 1999, when the decentralization law was enacted, powers, funding, and human resources were to be transferred from provincial administration to local authorities. However, personnel and financial resources have not yet been devolved, while local administrative bodies find it difficult to develop their visions and formulate long-term projects for the Local Strategic Development Plans (LSDPs) that they prepare.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Thailand and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB)[1] shared the above issues of urban development in local cities of Thailand and recognized the need for practical sustainable urban development policy for development of good model cities, which could be

[1] NESDB was reorganized as the National Economic and Social Development Council in 2018.

disseminated to other cities. It is in this context that the Government of Thailand asked the Government of Japan to undertake a project entitled "the Project for Promoting Sustainability in Future Cities of Thailand", or Thailand Future Cities Project (hereinafter called TFCP) to learn from Japan's experience and know-how in the field of sustainable city management. TFCP aims to establish a development concept of a future city for local cities in Thailand, which was to be reflected in the 12th National Economic Social Development Plan (NESDP), and to develop appropriate implementation mechanisms and measures to realize sustainable urban development in Thailand whereby tessaban take the initiative in promoting this concept in collaboration with relevant authorities, the public, and the private sector. TFCP was implemented between 2015 and 2021. This article was prepared based on the output of TFCP.

Content

Salient Socio-Economic Changes in Thailand and Growing Need to Promote Sustainable Development in Local Cities

Prevailing Demographic Changes

Thailand is entering a depopulation phase and the aging of communities causes diminishing economic dynamics in existing urban centers. While the overall population of Thailand grows at 0.3% annually, some provinces, particularly in the northern and north-eastern regions, have already been in the depopulation phase since the 2010s. This declining trend is caused by a declining birth rate and population outflow. As a result, local cities are now facing a trend of an aging society.

Salient Changes in Economic Structure

Thailand has experienced rapid economic growth due to the improvement of the manufacturing and service sectors in the last 30 years, enhancing the lives of the people, especially in urban areas. Recently, along with globalization and regional economic integration such as the ASEAN Economic Community, more people and more goods are transported directly to and from local cities of Thailand. As a result, economies of local cities of Thailand are supported by labor from neighboring countries, such as Lao and Myanmar. The economic structure of local areas of Thailand needs to shift to more value-added industries rather than labor-intensive ones.

Urban Development Agenda in the 20-Year National Strategy and National Economic and Social Development Plan

It is important to note that the 12th NESDP, which constitutes the first five years of the 20-year National Strategy, prescribes that local cities are to be developed to become local growth centers. Local cities are expected to be "Livable Cities" for all and to have more proactive roles and functions as development bases for provinces or clusters of provinces (12th NESDP). This calls for practical and strong actions based on "organized city planning" to change the trends of diminishing dynamics in the existing urban centers.

The draft 13th NESDP, which was released in October 2021, also defines urban areas as potential growth engines to create added value to support economic growth and provide a wide range of development opportunities for all sectors. It sets development of regional cities with

prosperity, modernity, and livability as one of its 13 milestones. On the other hand, it also mentions possible negative impacts of urbanization on natural resources and global environment, such as increasing amounts of greenhouse gases (GHGs), and stresses the need to adjust and manage urban activities by utilizing ICT and other technologies.

The 13th NESDP also points out the constraints faced by local administrative organizations (LAOs) to promote sustainable development, such as lack of human resources and financial capacity. However, it also focuses on some advanced LAOs making progress and taking innovative steps, and the private sector being more involved in urban development.

Key Implications for Sustainable Urban Development

Considering these salient socio-economic changes and key urban development challenges faced by local cities in Thailand, the following six key priority areas can be set for sustainable urban development in local cities, which should be well considered both in national urban development initiatives and local government development policies.

- Self-sustaining economic competitiveness and promotion of centrality of city;

- Preparation for depopulation, aging, and low fertility society;

- Attention on sustainable environmental strategy and global warming;

- Attractiveness of city and inheritance of locality;

- Strengthening of regional connectivity; and

- Strengthened initiatives of tessaban and people's participation in development.

Potential and Constraints for Tessaban to Realize Sustainable Development

Local initiatives are essential because each tessaban is unique. Tessaban have different visions, strategies, and project priorities to tackle issues incurred with socio-economic changes, which largely depend on each tessaban's size and financial and administrative capabilities, as well as the characteristics of the regions of which they are a part. The tessaban know the local realities better than anyone else, even the national and regional government.

As stated above, the draft 13th NESDP expects LAOs (including tessaban) to undertake more local development initiatives. There are several notable and advanced tessaban that have clear vision and conduct unique activities. Tessaban with strong mayoral leadership and insightful and committed staff have promoted creative development, which has been recognized with national and international awards, such as the Livable City Award, the King Pradjadhipok Institute (KPI) Award, and the ASEAN Environment Sustainable City (ESC) Award.

However, existing provincial and local administrative systems in Thailand have several constraints that limit the ability of tessaban to take initiatives that promote development to meet local needs.

- Small size of tessaban, in terms of area and population;

- Limited financial capacity and a small percentage of its own resources, and heavy reliance on grants, shared tax, and subsidies;

- Lack of human resources, particularly technical staff;

- Limited authority that prevents tessaban from conducting any projects outside of their administrative boundaries.

Need for Institutional and Administrative Mechanisms to Support Local Initiatives

Even when leaders of tessaban have a clear vision and awareness of their issues and needs, it is hard for them to manage their development. Therefore, the following government policy and administrative mechanisms are strongly needed to support local efforts and initiatives.

Linkage Between the National Government Program and Local Reality

Although Thailand has gradually pursued decentralization in terms of financial resources and authority since the 1997 Constitution, financial resources allocated to the LAOs are still very limited. Most projects conducted in local cities are implemented by departments of central government ministries. For example, flood protection projects are managed by the Department of Public Works and Town and Country Planning (DPT), tourism development by the Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports, the universal design project by the Department of Older Persons under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, etc. Even the Comprehensive Plan or urban planning is prepared by the provincial DPT.

On the other hand, central departments face difficulties understanding genuine local needs and formulating local development projects effectively, even though they have provincial or regional field offices.

There is a strong need for a tool or channel for the national government and each line department to effectively understand local needs and implement projects along with their policies and programs.

Strengthened People's Participation in Development

Participation of the people is the key to enhancing local development capacity. Active participation of local communities has achieved good outcomes, particularly for projects related to urban development improvement, welfare promotion, and cultural preservation. It has also ensured the sustainability of those outputs through the active involvement of stakeholders in operation and management activities.

The 12th NESDP identified good public administration as one of the ten important strategies, stating "the decentralization of power, coupled with greater public participation and a fair distribution of responsibilities among national, regional, and local actors, will also be promoted" (NESDB, n.d., p. 8). Self-support, mutual support, and public support through participation are important considerations in defining the role of tessaban in urban development and in designing certain actors for urban development. It can also facilitate private sector involvement to gain support toward increasing the prosperity and wealth of the city.

Regional Approach Integrating the Urbanized Area, Including Several LAOs

Urbanization extends far beyond the administrative boundaries of tessaban.

Overall urban management to cover integrated urban areas is required for practical sustainable development. Regional integration and development of the core city and regional center is identified in the National Reform Plans and Procedures Act, B.E. 2560 [2017] as well, which is essential to enhance regional development of Thailand as described below. Economic activities, such as domestic or overseas trading, the development of targeted industries, and regional connectivity can generate income for the relevant and supporting industries and thus increase employment in the urban areas and surroundings. Therefore, the strategy of core urban development of clustered areas and transportation routes is necessary to serve economic growth and urbanization. The core of urban development is to enhance income generation and to spread prosperity from major cities to secondary cities and surrounding areas.

Coordination among the core or central tessaban and surrounding tessaban as well as *tambon* (sub-district) administrative organizations (TAOs) is required to identify priority issues, prepare development plans, formulate projects, and implement them.

Development of the Sustainable Future City Initiative

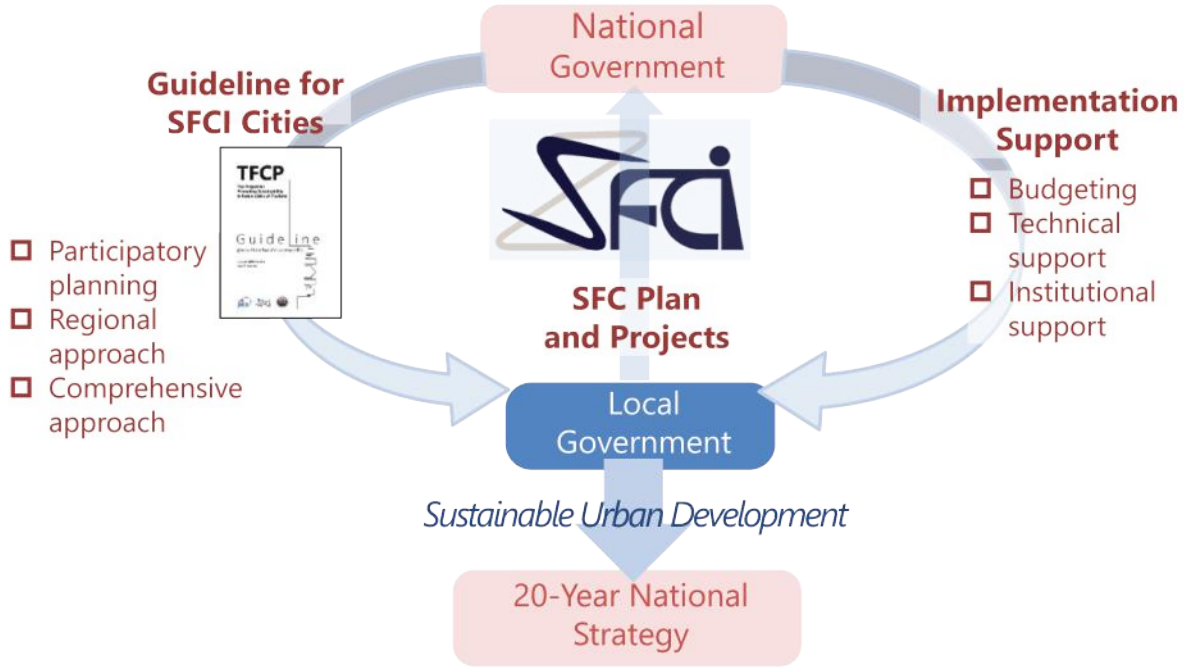
Based on the above considerations, the Sustainable Future City Initiative (SFCI) was proposed as an implementation mechanism to undertake key urban development challenges of the local cities of Thailand. The overall concept and outstanding features of SFCI are summarized below.

National-Government-Guided and Local-Government-Driven Development

With an overall goal to make cities sustainable through emerging socio-economic changes, SFCI set an overall concept of "national-government-guided and local-government-driven development," which has the following three principles: (i) local-driven development, where the local government should have the initiative to formulate its vision and strategies and propose projects to achieve its vision; (ii) people-centered development, where all planning processes should be done using a participatory approach in order to understand the actual issues and needs of stakeholders and to ensure the collaboration of stakeholders in the implementation and operation stage; and (iii) national-government-guided and supported development that connects the proposed plans and projects of the local government with the financial and institutional support of the national government, which currently does not occur in Thailand.

SFCI supports local cities in identifying unique and practical solutions to key issues and achieving the visions of the local communities. That is to say, SFCI aims to link local issues and visions with national financial and technical resources, addressing a linkage missing in the existing administrative system.

Figure 1
Overall Concept of the Sustainable Future City Initiative



New and Different Approaches of SFCI

SFCI focuses on four key planning approaches, namely (i) holistic approach, covering the economic, social, and environmental aspects at the planning phase; (ii) regional approach, for effective and efficient urban management; (iii) long-term approach, particularly for future sustainability assessment; and (iv) collaborative approach, involving various stakeholders for planning, development, and operation phase. This practice is new and different from that in existing urban development plans of local cities in Thailand, including the Comprehensive Plan authorized by DPT and LSDP by Department of Local Administration (DLA).

Common Visions of Sustainable Future Cities

Sustainable urban development is a global concept to balance economic, social, and environmental aspects of development. While the Sustainable Future Cities (SFC) concept can be applied in any city, visions of SFC vary depending on the uniqueness of participating cities. The SFC Common Vision articulates five characteristics to which participating cities should aspire when preparing SFC visions to address key urban development challenges.

- **Self-sustaining competitive city.** A city where self-sustaining industries are promoted by utilizing local resources.

- **Attractive and distinctive identity.** A city where people and investment are attracted to a locally unique culture, lifestyle, and landscape.

- **Eco-friendly and resilient city.** A city sufficiently livable with basic infrastructure and public services as well as a well-managed green and natural environment, thereby resilient against disasters.

- **Safe, secure, and inclusive city.** A city where people will grow safe and healthy, will equally receive education, and mobility is ensured for the weak such as the elderly, handicapped, and pregnant.

- **Civic pride for future generations.** A city the citizens feel proud of, that will confidently succeed for the next generations.

SFC Common Visions were reflected into one of the priority policies of the 12th NESDP.

Target Cities of SFCI

Target cities for participation in SFCI are regional growth cities and local urban centers. Since SFCI aims to serve as a policy tool to direct more equitable and sustainable development all over the county, SFCI target cities should be centers for sustainable urban development of their respective urban areas. They should also have socio-economic potential sufficient to spill over to their surrounding areas. Specifically, SFCI target cities include all *tessaban nakhon* (city municipalities) and *tessaban mueang* (town municipalities).

SFCI can be effective as an operational platform that facilitates organized planning and collaboration between different parties, which is an essential element of regional integration. While TAOs and *tessaban tambon* (sub-district municipalities), the smallest category of tessaban, are not the target of the SFCI, they are still involved in its planning process to consider sustainable development of the integrated urban areas.

SFCI Model Cities Project

SFCI model cities project was conducted in two phases. The first phase, from 2016 to 2018, aimed to examine the SFCI mechanism in practice and to strengthen capacities of model cities and make leading cities for sustainable urban development of local cities of Thailand. The second phase, from 2019 to 2021, had additional objectives to develop the capacity of the Urban Development Strategy Division, a newly-established division of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) and to enhance regional development of the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC), which was initiated by the Thai Government.

Selection of Model Cities

The first phase model cities were selected through a proposal process. NESDB and JICA Project Team prepared a long list of candidate cities, including tessaban nakhon and tessaban mueang, with strong leadership and capabilities for city development and capacity to be a models for other cities to replicate. The long list of tessaban was evaluated based on the following criteria.

- **Socio-Economic Vitality:** The socio-economic conditions, including population growth rates and aging rates, were analyzed to identify which tessaban showed strong vitality and which were facing depopulation and aging.

- **Financial Capacity:** Revenue per capita and share of own revenue were quantitatively analyzed to identify tessaban with strong financial foundations.

- **Tessaban Capacity:** To determine the capacity of the tessaban, the TFCP team members evaluated some of the awards each tessaban received, including the KPI Award

and the Livable City Award. Direct discussions with tessaban and comments from relevant agencies were also considered as part of the evaluation.

- **Suitability for Highlighting Key Issues of Local Cities:** The candidate model cities had to have worked to resolve key issues of local cities, such as (i) strengthening of self-sustaining economic competitiveness/ promotion of centrality of the city; (ii) preparation for depopulation, aging, and low fertility society; (iii) attention to or acknowledgment of sustainable environmental strategy and global warming; (iv) strengthened regional connectivity; and (v) strengthened initiatives of tessaban and people's participation in development.

As a result, six tessaban were selected: Tessaban Nakhon Chiang Rai, Tessaban Nakhon Khon Kaen, Tessaban Mueang Krabi, Tessaban Mueang Nan, Tessaban Mueang Phanat Nikhom, and Tessaban Nakhon Phitsanulok. The selection process identified tessaban with high capabilities, willingness to join, and strong commitment on the part of the mayor. However, this type of application process takes a long time to select model cities, and it is difficult to select tessaban without any outstanding activities.

The second phase model cities applied through a different, government-strategy-oriented selection process. The NESDC decided to select tessaban from the SEC, a key development scheme initiated by the Thai Government to enhance regional development and thus develop from the middle-income trap. The SEC includes Ranong, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, and Chumphon provinces, covering the upper portion of Thailand's southern region and linking the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, which easily connects with neighboring countries. Tessaban Mueang Ranong and Tessaban Mueang Chumphon were selected as core cities of SEC.

Output of SFCI Model Cities Project

As a result of the planning process of SFCI, all of eight model cities formulated their respective SFC plans and identified specific SFC programs, including lists of SFC projects. JICA Pilot Projects were also selected and implemented as a priority project to demonstrate coordination and partnership and to put the plan into effective practice. Operation and management (O&M) plans were prepared and embedded into the planning and implementation process.

Table 1

SFCI Model Cities' Plans and Programs

Tessaban	SFC Vision and Strategies	SFC Program	JICA Pilot Project
First Phase			
Chiang Rai	**Vision: Chiang Rai, the City of Happiness for All** Strategy 1: Infrastructure System Development for Safety in Life and Property Strategy 2: Generation of New Value by the Interaction of All Ages Strategy 3: Development of Health Services for All Ages	Generation of New Value by the Interaction of All Ages	The Project for Promoting Interactions Among All Ages through Active Learning
Khon Kaen	**Vision: Make the City Global, Create a "Happy Society" and "Smart City"** Strategy 1: Enhance "Centricity "in Isan Strategy 2: Smart and Yet Traditional Urban Renewal Strategy 3: Green and Quality Amenity City Strategy 4: Beyond Car-Oriented Development Strategy 5: Sustainable Urban Growth with Nature Strategy 6: Design for All Strategy 7: Safe, Secure, and Quality Living Environment	Strategy 4: Beyond Car-Oriented Development	Public Transport Promotion
Krabi	**Vision: To Make Krabi City an Art and Culture City with Tourism** Strategy 1: Conservation & Promotion of Environmental and Tourism Resources Program Strategy 2: Conservation & Promotion of Cultural and Tourism Resources Strategy 3: Promotion of Community-Based Tourism (CBT)	Enhancement on Dissemination of Andaman Culture	The Project for Improvement on Andaman Cultural Center
Nan	**Vision: Nan, the Happiness and Life in Old Town** Strategy 1: Revitalize the of Value of Nan's Existing Cultures and Traditions Strategy 2: Improve the Quality of Life in Nan's Style Strategy 3: Improve & Conserve the Quality of Environment	Cross-Cutting Project of All 3 Strategies	Experience Nan Live Museum along the Bicycle Route

Tessaban	SFC Vision and Strategies	SFC Program	JICA Pilot Project
Phanat Nikhom	**Vision: Livable City** Strategy 1: Strengthen Phanat Nikhom as an Urban Service Center Strategy 2: Improve Livability for Multiple Generations Strategy 3: Utilize Local Resources for Uniqueness as Phanat Nikhom	Provision of Urban Services for Various Generations and Their Comfort	Project for Introducing Universal Design in Phanat Nikhom
Phitsanulok	**Vision: Central City with a Nice Landscape and Happy People** Strategy 1: Encouragement of Next Leading Business Strategy 2: Improvement of Naa Yuu (Sustainability) and Local Pride for All Generations Strategy 3: Provision of Infrastructure Utilities for Safety and Sufficient Living Environment	Preparation for Aged Society	The Pilot Zone for Creating Sustainable Ageing Society
Second Phase			
Chumphon	**Vision: Chumphon the Livable City, Happy Society and Good Quality of Life** Strategy 1: Create a Happy City for People of All Ages Strategy 2: Smart Mobility Strategy 3: Center of Agricultural Products and Food Safety Strategy 4: Gateway of the Southern Corridor and a Must-Visit Destination Strategy 5: Integrated Eco-system with Smart Data and Planning	Public Space Design for Better Recreational Experiences and Healthy Living	Park and Sports Facilities Improvement Project
Ranong	**Vision: Being the Head of Health Tourism and Livable City with Well-Being** Strategy 1: Inclusive and Multicultural City Strategy 2: World Class Holistic Health and Wellness Tourism Destination City Strategy 3: Green City Strategy 4: Healthy City Strategy 5: Safe, Convenient, and Comfortable City	Improvements of Park, Transport and Cityscape	Healthy Park Renovation with Walkable City Network

Source: Author

Lessons Learned from the Two Phases of SFCI Model Cities Project

Participatory Planning Approach

SFCI introduced a participatory planning approach that used a Planning Team (PT) meeting discussion with a variety of key stakeholders at each planning step, namely issues identification, visioning, and project identification. This participatory approach helps tessaban identify actual local issues and find a variety of solutions. It can also enhance the sustainability of project implementation by building consensus among stakeholders, thus ensuring operation and management for the projects.

The following challenges to improving the participatory approach were identified.

- **To ensure commitment and active involvement of PT members:** Some PT members are listed as representatives of organizations, but different persons attend each meeting, causing discontinuity of discussion and little commitment from each member.

- **To involve representatives of the private sector:** While the SFCI Guidelines advise involving the private sector as PT members and in the SFCI planning process, the tessaban tend to instead select stakeholders with whom they have close relations, resulting in little private sector involvement.

The challenges could be tackled with the following measures.

- **Stakeholder analysis for organizations and personnel:** A stakeholder analysis is recommended to examine organization mandate and specific persons with strong commitment and insight for sustainable development.

- **Diversity and less hierarchy of PT:** PT members must not be limited to the formal sector but should also come from outside each tessaban's network, such as young entrepreneurs, artists, and civil society network members. More diverse PT membership can provide a wider range of discussion and a higher level of creativity.

- **Involvement of the private sector:** Partnership between public and private institutions can be a key factor to SFCI. Public-private partnership is recommended to make the PT more open to a cooperative network with the private sector. Private sector involvement can be considered for (i) large companies, which can bring advanced technologies or make large capital investments in development projects or support local development through corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, and (ii) small and local companies, which are expected to collaborate with tessaban and contribute to urban development over the long term.

Formulation of Comprehensive Plan

SFCI applies new planning approaches that consist of a regional approach to consider the urban area/urban cluster beyond the tessaban's administrative boundary, a holistic approach, including economic, social, and environmental aspects, and a collaborative approach involving a variety of stakeholders. These planning approaches were welcomed by all model cities.

- Tessaban produced their comprehensive SFC Plans and Projects with potential projects for them to develop in the future.

- SFCI planning process contributed to the capacity building of tessaban staff in terms of the participatory planning process with a wider perspective on multiple stakeholders and project formulation to be proposed for other relevant departments.

On the other hand, the SFCI planning process faced the following limitations regarding urban planning of local cities in Thailand.

- **Lack of an integrated urban data set:** A comprehensive planning process requires integrated urban data to enable understanding of existing urban problems and examination of critical issues and potential, such as industrial development, education, the medical sector, environment, and so on. However, there is no well-integrated and reliable urban dataset in Thailand. Data are scattered among relevant organizations but not coordinated. Collecting, integrating, and analyzing data is time-consuming. Most of the data are not available at the tessaban level but only at the *changwat* (provincial) level since most sectoral developments are authorized under provincial administration, not under local administration. Moreover, many of the available data are unreliable. For example, the data on the number of hotel rooms in each city is unreliable since many hotels operate without registering in order to avoid taxation. However, the most critical issue is demographic data. The census-based and registered population has a big gap. Most tessaban do not have accurate numbers of their non-registered populations.

- **Lack of existing sectoral development plan at the local level:** Comprehensive planning requires listing potential projects for various sectors, which can be coordinated with and extracted from existing sectoral plans such as the tourism and urban transport development plans. However, there are few sectoral development plans at the tessaban level, most of which are prepared by the changwat office of each department or even by national departments. For example, the Tourism Development Plan is prepared by the Office of Tourism and Sports of each changwat and the comprehensive plan by the provincial office of the DPT. It was difficult for tessaban to prepare a set of practical project lists under SFC vision and strategies.

Recommendations to overcome these challenges are presented below.

- **Integration into the LSDP:** Reflecting the comprehensive planning approach of SFCI into the LSDP, a statutory plan of tessaban authorized by DLA is highly recommended. It is necessary to integrate SFCI into the overall guideline for LSDP prepared by DLA.

- **Establishment of an urban data set:** Data inventory system development goes beyond the scope of SFCI and is rather a national concern. However, it is recommended (i) to collect available data in cooperation with provincial departments, including changwat-based data and district-based data, (ii) to organize an urban data set, and (iii) to update the data periodically. Data should cover demographic, social, environmental, and economic conditions. DLA, the authority in promoting and supporting the work of the LAOs, is urged to understand this issue and support the tessaban to organize an urban data set for comprehensive urban planning.

- **Conduct interview survey:** Conducting an interview survey with citizens, which can identify actual urban problems and promptly show the needs of the people, is highly suggested. It could compensate for the lack of data and provide a qualitative and quantitative basis for planning. The sample size could be about 200, covering various people. The result of the interview survey could be used to identify priority issues for tessaban's urban development.

Networking and Coordination with Relevant Organizations

All the model cities recognize that networking and coordinating with relevant organizations are essential for implementing the proposed SFC projects and sustainable O&M. Some advanced tessaban with strong long-term leadership already have established associations with relevant departments to get financial resources for development. On the other hand, it is a big challenge for small- to medium-sized tessaban, such as Ranong and Chumphon (second phase SFCI model cities), to create such networking themselves. SFCI can provide opportunities for such tessaban to propose their projects to national and provincial departments and to gain useful recommendations.

- National level committee is an important platform to support tessaban to reach the relevant organizations when and where necessary, similar to the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC)[2] under the TFCP. National level departments directly related to regional development can understand local needs as well as provide information about their development initiatives.

- Changwat level coordinating committee is also an important platform to link the vision and needs of tessaban with national and regional resources, which is one of the key concepts of SFCI.

Budgeting for Implementation of SFC Projects

Budgeting is the most important and critical issue for a tessaban to realize its vision. As for short-term and small-sized projects, some model cities integrated the proposed SFC Projects into their own LSDP and implemented them under their budget. Some SFC Projects have been proposed to the appropriate budgeting channel, such as the provincial administrative organization (PAO), functional budget, etc.; however, it is difficult for small-to-medium tessaban to find such prospective financial resources by themselves.

Laws and regulations should be carefully considered to identify available budget sources for project implementation. Tessaban need to understand not only their own authority but also that of other relevant organizations. It is important to provide tessaban with updated information about the budget where they can propose projects beyond their authority. In order to provide financial support for tessaban, SFCI Guidelines provide detailed information about approaches to such potential financial

[2] The Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) was established in order to facilitate inter-organizational coordination. It is chaired by the secretary general of NESDC and is comprised of relevant national departments. The JCC convenes at the time of report submissions and whenever necessary in order to discuss project framework, progress of activities, and any other pending issues.

resources, including types of budget sources and application procedures. While it also provides a detailed list of funds under major national departments under JCC, regularly updating it is necessary to cover time-limited policy-related special budgets and newly established development initiated by each department.

Sharing Experiences of Model Cities

All model cities highly appreciated having the opportunity to share their experiences with other model cities at the plenary workshop. Lessons learned can be shared on major urban development issues, such as aging society, local tourism development, mobility with public transport, and public space improvement. Each model city selected a specific sector from the SFCI Model City Project, such as tourism development in Krabi and public transport promotion in Khon Kaen. However, each model city can still learn from other cities about urban issues not discussed in SFCI but regarding which a city may have strong interest because it is currently confronting the issue or expects to face it in the future. A possible challenge for NESDC and other departments is to disseminate lessons learned to other cities in the future.

Lessons learned could be useful for others if shared through a website. Any tessaban facing similar issues could easily learn from the experiences of SFCI model cities. The SFCI Portal Site is being developed under the NESDC website, which can be further expanded by NESDC in the future by adding lessons from the next model cities.

Conduct of regular workshop: Similar to the TFCP, it is recommended to continuously organize plenary workshops to provide opportunities for tessabans to present their activities and for other cities to share lessons learned about key success and challenges. Such workshop activities are also expected to increase competitiveness among the participants.

City-to-City Collaboration

SFCI Plenary Workshops can be a platform for city-to-city collaboration and sharing of experiences among model cities. Cities can communicate directly and arrange study visits with each other. The TFCP also provided opportunities for collaboration with cities in Japan on some specific urban issues, as shown in the following images. The challenge is maintaining such a platform for city-to-city collaboration in Thailand.

- Tessaban Nakhon Chiang Rai and Makinohara City, Japan. After joining the first model city project, Tessaban Nakhon Chiang Rai and Makinohara City started to communicate and explore the possibility of a city-to-city collaboration. Both cities have international airports, and thus look for opportunities to connect with cities abroad. Each is also the largest tea production area in its respective country.

- Tessaban Mueang Krabi and Nago City, Japan. Tessaban Mueang Krabi and Nago City began coordinating for future city-to-city collaboration with support from TFCP. Both cities are located close to famous beaches, which are tourist attractions, and have similar issues attracting tourists within a city area. The cities applied for grassroots

program cooperation with JICA. It was approved, and it is expected to begin in 2022.

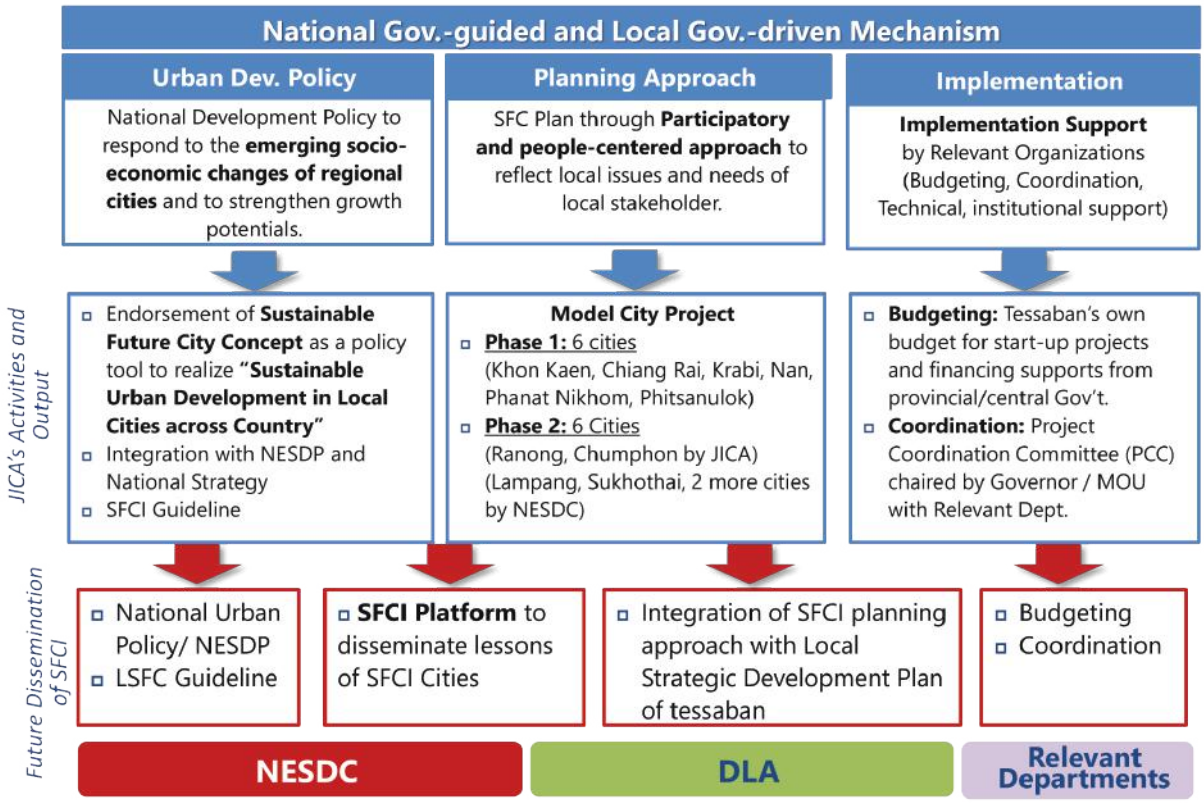
City-to-city collaboration can be established at two levels: (i) partnership of cities to support each other to deliver sustainable urban development and (ii) collaboration between two cities that share specific issues. The former exists in Thailand, such as the National Municipal League of Thailand (NMT) and KPI. NESDC, as a policy agency, can coordinate with those organizations to arrange periodic workshops and provide their policy agenda for local development.

Conclusion

Toward Future SFCI

Under JICA's Technical Corporation, SFCI introduced a national government-guided and local government-driven mechanism, composed of (i) the "Sustainable Future City" urban development policy to respond to the emerging socio-economic changes of regional cities in Thailand; (ii) a new planning approach, i.e., participatory planning and comprehensive planning; and (iii) project implementation support. While JICA's Thai Future City Project accommodated all three components, each should have different counterpart agencies that possess the appropriate authority, i.e. national urban policy of NESDC, planning approach of DLA and DPT, and implementation of relevant departments. Sustainable urban development of local cities requires all three components working together. In order for Thailand to continue SFCI, it is necessary for all the related agencies to work together to continue the achievements of SFCI in the future, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
SFCI's Components and Their Respective Counterpart Agencies



Expected Role for NESDC as a Policy Agency

- **Policy Endorsement:** NESDC is expected to continue to promote regional cities' development as a core of sustainable development of each region, which can be observed in the draft 13th National Economic Sustainable Development Plan.

- **Transfer of SFCI/LSFC Guideline:** The planning approach of SFCI and Livable and Sustainable Future City (LSFC)[3] to DLA is expected to be transferred in order to integrate into the LSDP.

- **Keep SFCI Platform:** Network with SFCI model cities and LSFC model cities will be NESDC-UDSD's valuable resources, including lessons learned from them. It is recommended to disseminate key successes and challenges on specific urban issues as lessons learned from model cities and maintain communication channels with those tessaban to discuss emerging local issues.

[3] NESDC has conducted SFCI in two more cities using their fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget as "Livable and Sustainable Future City (LSFC) Project."

Expected Role for DLA to Follow Up SFCI

- **Integration with LSDP:** Integration of the planning concept of SFCI into the planning approach of LSDP includes a participatory planning approach to ensure coordination with a variety of local stakeholders. It can also promote private sector involvement in urban development. The regional or comprehensive approach should also be further elaborated into the LSDP, which can promote coordination with development plans of national (provincial) departments toward effective regional development.

- **Support Project Implementation:** DLA is expected to support tessaban to implement the proposed projects through two channels: (i) general budget under local administration, including specific subsidy, and (ii) coordination with relevant department function budgets through Provincial Office of Local Administration.

- **City-to-City Network:** While SFCI targeted selected model cities, DLA needs to support all LAOs. It is expected to have a city-to-city network for LAOs to share their good practices and lessons learned from SFCI model cities with other tessaban. DLA can also provide opportunities for tessaban to collaborate.

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Urbanization and Cities of the Future

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Abstract

While widespread infrastructure investment has come in parallel with rapid economic growth and urbanization in the last decade, new challenges unique to urban areas are emerging. In an age of unsurpassed urban growth and rapidly evolving digital systems and platforms, the prosperity of cities will depend strongly on their ability to affect proper governance that adequately addresses the last mile of development1 while having the foresight to tackle future shocks and emerging trends. Never in history has such a vast array of tools, strategies, and frameworks presented themselves at the disposal of city administrators and urban planners. Yet even with the unparalleled communication and learning made possible through online exchanges, we are reminded that no two cities are the same; each presents unique challenges to overcome. Existing literature already captures the shifting of focus away from the traditional discourse in conceptualizing governance merely in terms of vertical and spatial scales, so we consider both local governments' and citizens' perspectives. We posit in this

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[1] According to UNDP and UNCDF (Pedrajas & Choritx, 2016), the "last mile" refers to the poorest of the poor, and the people, places, and small enterprise levels that are under-served and excluded, where development needs are greatest, and where resources are most scarce.

article that true liberal, inclusive, and indeed holistic city governance must consider two fundamental approaches related to both solutions-orientation and levels of engagement. Examining the megatrend of urbanization globally and in Thailand, we consider some of the key implications. A closer look at modern urban planning and strategy both in Thailand and abroad is unpacked through the lens of localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while taking stock of the impacts COVID-19 has had on the SDGs.

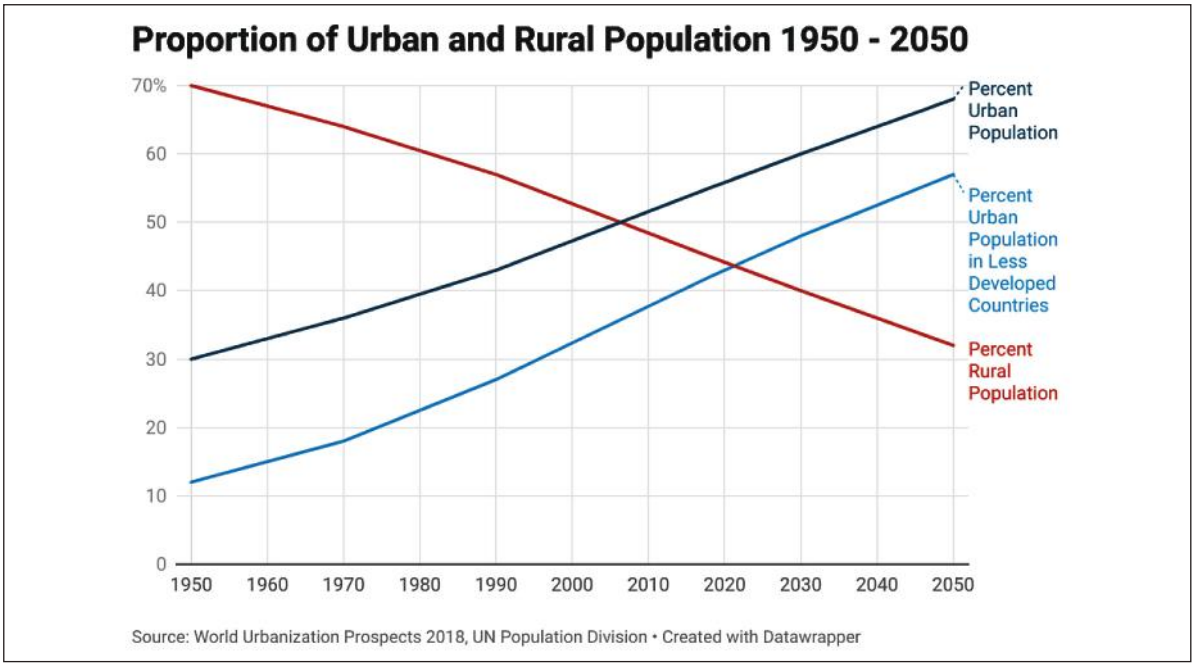
Keywords: Urbanization, sustainable development, development policy, smart cities, future cities, international framework, decentralization, SDG localization

Megatrends that Shape the World

Between 1950 and 2018, the world's population skyrocketed from 2.54 billion to 7.63 billion, with much of that growth taking place in urban areas. From 30% of the total population in 1950, the urban proportion of the world's population almost doubled to 55% in 2018. This trend is projected to continue until 2050, when urban population is expected to account for 68% of the world's total population (United Nations Population Division [UNPD], 2018). Rapid urbanization is recognized as one of five megatrends that are shaping our world, along with climate change and resource scarcity, shift in global economic power, demographic and social change, and technological breakthroughs (PwC, 2022). The interlinkages among these megatrends cannot be neglected.

Figure 1

Proportion of Urban and Rural Population 1950-2050



As the proportion of world population aged 60 and older is projected to reach 21% by 2050 (UNPD, 2017), and with global life expectancy skyrocketing from 32 years in 1900 to 72.6 years in 2019 (Roser et al., 2013), the demographic shift obliges cities to provide spaces that can embrace people with various needs, especially older people. Along with the trend of longer lives, people are projected to work longer, delaying their retirement. Cities that foster active aging are key to prosperity in the coming years.

While cities contribute to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions from energy consumption, they are also vulnerable to it. Climate change impacts urban infrastructure and service provision to citizens. Coastal cities are already facing the risk of rising sea level. Gordon et al. (2007) found that 13% of the world's urban population then resided in the Low Elevation Coastal Zone[2] and the least developed countries have a higher share of population living in that zone compared to OECD countries. As climate change affects most cities in the world, response and adaptation become vital to the future of all cities. However, many cities still lack comprehensive plans to directly address climate change.

Urbanization in Thailand and its Implications

After World War II, changes in domestic and international politics led to changes in the Thai economy. During the 1960s, investments focused on the country's infrastructure and privatized state enterprises, supported by the establishment of national economic institutions including the National Economic Council.[3] The first National Economic and Social Development Plan was implemented in 1961, covering social and economic development strategies for the country. During this period, urbanization in Thailand slowly increased. Along with the growth of Bangkok, major regional cities such as Chiangmai, Hatyai, and Khon Kaen grew in population from infrastructure development, observed by Kuan-arj and Thinphan-nga (2022). However, from a national perspective, urbanization was considered slow. In 1960, 12.5% of Thailand's population lived in urban areas; by 1990, that percentage had increased only slightly to 18.7%. The majority of the population lived in rural areas and Thai society remained characterized as agrarian.

Urbanization started to increase dramatically after 1990, with the National Economic and Social Development Plan starting to designate target areas. During 1982 – 1991, Bangkok and major regional cities were targeted for development priorities based on the newly developed major – minor city system. The share of urban population increased sharply, to 31.1% in 2000 and 44.2% in 2010. And in 2018, for the first time in Thailand's history, a majority of the population lived in urban areas. The trend is projected to continue at least until 2040 when the country's urbanization rate is expected to reach 74.3%. The Central region will be the most urbanized region with a 70.1% urbanization

[2] Defined by the paper as a contiguous area along the coast that is less than 10 meters above sea level.

[3] Forerunner of today's Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council.

rate. In contrast, the Western region will be the least urbanized with only a 57.7% urbanization rate.

Apart from the general urbanization of the Thai population, growth of mid-sized cities is also occurring. Whereas only Bangkok was considered a city in 1990, Thailand is projected to have 33 cities in 2030. Among these 33 cities, six will have populations in the range of 1 – 5 million, and 26 will have populations between 300,000 – 1 million (UNPD, 2018). These cities will act as supporters to major regional cities in terms of providing services to the surrounding areas.

Urbanization brings various challenges and opportunities. A positive correlation between urbanization and productivity has been observed by researchers since 1975 (Duranton, 2015). Population density brings opportunities for structural transformation, productivity increase, infrastructure development, and sharing of knowledge. While urbanization is developing, the labor force is relocated from agriculture in rural areas to manufacturing and services in urban centers, transforming the economic structure of the country. Urbanization may lead to productivity increase. It is found that a 10% increase in population increases wages and productivity by 0.2 – 1% (Duranton, 2015). Urbanization also creates demand for infrastructure development. Investment in transportation systems is found to reduce costs of transport for both goods and passengers (Li, 2017). Thus, with investments in various infrastructure, cities offer greater access to utilities, services, housing, employment opportunities, and education. The "digital divide," meaning the gap between people who have access to ICT including Internet and people who do not, is smaller in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2021). In 2018, 66% of the urban population in Thailand had access to Internet, compared to 49% in rural areas (National Statistical Office, 2022).

Despite the benefits urbanization may bring, without good planning cities can be "crowded, disconnected, and costly" (Lall et al., 2017). The downsides of density include urban poverty, pollution, and higher costs of living. While urbanization may bring prosperity and opportunities to a majority of people, some may be left behind, marginalized, and excluded from accessing services, resources, and equal opportunities. Despite the number of households under the poverty line in Thailand having declined from 8,021 in 1990 to 1,403 in 2020, the proportion of low-income households that reside in urban areas has more than doubled, from 21% to 46% (National Statistical Office, 2022a). The urban poor are usually forced to live in poor-condition housing or informal settlements with no access to clean water or sanitation, and higher risk of crime. In terms of connectivity, even within well-connected cities, connectivity remains limited or absent in some demographic groups who have more difficulties to access technology. In 2018, 88% of the population aged 60 and older in urban areas in Thailand had no access to Internet, compared to the average 39% of the total urban population (National Statistical Office, 2022b).

Unplanned urbanization also leads to uncontrolled pollution. Solid waste increased from 24 million tons in 2008 (Department of Pollution Control [DPC], 2018) to 28 million tons in 2018 (DPC, 2022). The immense amount of solid waste

leads to serious waste management challenges. Open dumps used to be an effective solution, by keeping waste separated from urban areas with only a small amount of investment and maintenance required. However, with rapid population growth, larger volumes of waste produced lead to greater negative impacts from these sites such as odor, infection, and water and ground contamination. In 2020, 32% of the total waste was considered not properly managed by the Department of Pollution Control. Overall, 1,760 out of 2,271 waste management facilities in Thailand, or 77.5%, are reported to be improperly managed landfills (DPC, 2022).

The Thailand Climate Risk Country Profile (World Bank Group & Asian Development Bank, 2021) has observed an increase in temperature and annual precipitation across Thailand and reveals significant natural hazards including flood, drought, and cyclone. Thailand is cited as one of the ten most flood-affected countries globally and is ranked ninth on the list of the top ten countries most affected by climate change from 2000 - 2019 by Germanwatch's Global Climate Risk Index 2021. There is a significant risk that the poorest and marginalized groups will experience disproportionately greater loss and damage.

Finally, urbanization may be costly. Urban citizens may have to experience higher costs of living related to cost of food, transportation, and housing. Thailand's national average household income increased 12% between 2011 – 2019. However, average household expenditure has increased more quickly, by 19%. While wages are usually higher in urban areas, higher wages may not always lead to higher productivity. Labor Productivity Index Per Hour Worked in non-agricultural activities in Thailand in 2021 increased 20.15%, when compared to the 100-point-baseline in 2013. The productivity of information and communication related activities has doubled to 229.67 points (or a 129.67% increase). However, some activities have decreased in productivity. Professional, scientific, and technical activities have decreased to 85.05 points, administrative and support services to 90.40 points, and transport and storage to 95.10 points in the 4th quarter of 2020 (Bank of Thailand, 2022).

These numbers reflect that while urbanization can bring great opportunities to people, it also requires a serious planning process to ensure sustainability, inclusivity, and people-centric approach. As observed in emerging African cities by Lall et al. (2017), structural regulatory and institutional constraints can hinder productivity, prevent specialization, and lead to urbanization without growth.

COVID-19 and its Impacts on Sustainable Development Goals

COVID-19 represents an unprecedented global crisis – a human development crisis that goes far beyond the health crisis. The crisis affects every aspect of our lives and social and economic activities. It is superimposed on unresolved tensions between people and technology, between people and the planet, and between the haves and the have-nots, disrupting progress toward the achievement of the country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2021 Sustainable Development Goals Report (United Nations [UN], 2021) reveals that in 2020 the global extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in over 20 years. World hunger was exacerbated and progress in health and education was reversed. Women and vulnerable groups bore the most brutal brunt. The pandemic intensified income inequalities within and across countries. Crises on climate, biodiversity, and pollution were exacerbated, with most countries unable to meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Concerning sustainable cities and communities, the pandemic has intensified the plight of slum dwellers. The impacts are bigger for those who are already vulnerable. Only half of 156 countries that developed plans to respond to pandemic-related and other risks and promote long-term inclusive, sustainable, equitable, and environmentally resilient development actually implemented those plans. With COVID-19 disproportionately affecting urban areas, updates to existing national urban policies are urgently required to reshape urban design to prepare for, respond to, and build resilience to current and future risks.

Thailand's economy was severely affected by COVID-19. The impact of the pandemic was felt by all sectors. Thailand's GDP contracted 6.2% in 2020, with declines in agriculture (-3.5%), industrial (-5.9%), and services (-6.7%).[4] Among the hardest hit were 20.36 million informal workers (53.7% of total employment).[5] The gendered impacts of COVID-19 are reinforcing existing gender inequalities and risk causing severe harm to women's empowerment. Women are more likely to be employed in informal and precarious forms of employment, which makes them highly vulnerable during economic downturns.

Statistics show that inequality still prevails. Prior to COVID-19, Thailand's 2019 Human Development Index was 0.777, with a Gender Development Index of 1.008. However, adjusted for inequality, the Human Development Index is reduced to 0.646 (a 16.9 percent loss). The COVID 19-pandemic, climate change, and other severe environmental challenges aggravate the existing inequality problem in Thailand, as the poor and the most vulnerable Thai people are the most affected.

Regarding progress toward the SDGs, Thailand ranks 43rd among 165 countries worldwide and 1st in the East and South Asia region; Thailand scores 74.19, higher than the regional average score of 65.7.[6] The country has successfully achieved SDG 1 (No Poverty) and is on track toward achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). However, major challenges remain for SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality), SDG 14 (Life under Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Challenges are also present in the other remaining SDGs.

[4] Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2022. Gross Domestic Product: Q4/2021.

[5] National Statistical Office, 2020. The Informal Employment Survey 2020.

[6] UN 2021-https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/thailand

A significant challenge remains for SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) despite moderate progress. Thailand has leveraged a practical framework and mechanisms for implementing urban development policies and, in 2019, passed the Town Planning Act, B.E. 2562 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). This legislation comprises the central pillar for urban planning and focuses on increasing participation from all sectors to promote inclusive and transparent urban planning.

In summary, urbanization is a global phenomenon with high-impact challenges and opportunities. In the past, development policies might have focused on physical infrastructure and economic growth. With COVID-19 adding stress to those challenges, the need for sustainable and inclusive development has never been greater.

Towards a Good City of the Future

All the challenges and opportunities of urbanization lead us to the question of what a good city is. Observed by Badach and Dymnicka (2017), multiple contemporary concepts of "good urban governance" are based on inclusiveness, citizenship, accountability, processuality, and effectiveness, showing the trend of turning toward sustainable-development-based approaches. These concepts are found to share common keywords with UN frameworks: the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda, and the Leave No One Behind principle.

Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities was established by the UN General Assembly in 2015 as one among 17 SDGs, after the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) period. The goal includes targets on affordable housing, basic services, inclusive transportation systems, natural and cultural preservation, inclusive accessible green spaces, environmental quality, and public engagement. These targets are set in the aim of making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. They also indicate that sustainable development of cities is not just about economic development, but human and environmental aspects as well.

While the SDGs are about what and how much to achieve, the New Urban Agenda, a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future of cities adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development in 2016, is about the how and who of achievement. National urban policies, urban legislation and regulations, urban planning and design, local economy and municipal finance, and local implementation are the New Urban Agenda's five pillars that can abet cities to achieve accountability, processuality, and effectiveness.

From the concept of sustainable development and the tools to accomplish accountability, processuality, and effectiveness, "good urban governance" cannot disregard the indispensability of inclusiveness and citizenship of the city. A city's approach to governance should be shaped by regard for the levels of engagement of all individuals affected by decision-making processes. The governance framework should enable the voices of citizens to bring about real changes in government actions. According to Arnstein (1969), the two lowest forms of

participation are referred to as Manipulation and Therapy; both are considered to be "non-participation" as their purpose is not to engage people but to provide a platform for authorities to have one-way communication with citizens. Falling into the next level of participation, called "Tokenism," the forms of participation called Informing, Consultation, and Placation allow citizens to be heard, but there is no guarantee that the ideas they express will be implemented in the government's actions. Government still reserves the full right to decide, thought it may take advice from citizens. Voices of citizens start to impact government's decisions in the highest level of participation, called "Citizen Control." At this level, participation in the forms of Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control means that citizens have power, ranging from being able to negotiate with decision-makers to being a part of decision-making processes. In regard to city governance, higher levels of citizen participation are desirable for several reasons: greater citizen participation can guard against exploitation of disadvantaged citizens; it draws a greater spectrum of information and knowledge into decision-making processes, potentially improving decisions; and substantive involvement in decision-making processes can increase stakeholders' acceptance of the eventual decisions. It also ensures that no one is marginalized, excluded, discriminated against, or left behind while others thrive and enjoy prosperity, in accordance with the UN's Leave No One Behind principle.

Given a trend of urban primacy and spatial distribution arising from decades of imbalanced urban development policies, together with increasingly severe impacts from climate change and environmental challenges, Thailand needs to redesign its urban configurations to become more sustainable, inclusive, and responsive. Thailand's future urban development should be implemented at three levels (Chantaraboontha & Chenphuengpawn, 2018): development at the structural level to redistribute prosperity to secondary cities and address spatial development challenges; development at the planning level, especially in urban zoning, to make the most effective use of the city's space and improve citizens' quality of life; and development at the micro-level through digital technology for reducing inequality.

"Future City" Towards Inclusive Governance, Resilience, and Sustainable Cities

Through its global mandate to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion, the vision of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) work in cities and on urbanization was set out under three broad areas, namely sustainable development pathways, inclusive and effective democratic governance, and resilience-building (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2013). Promoting sustainable cities is featured in SDG 11 of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015a).

Based upon the above vision, cities should be able to 1) address poverty and inequality as well as mitigate the risks from shocks (Sustainability); 2) enable all groups of people to contribute to creating opportunities, to share in the benefits of

development, and to participate in decision-making (Inclusivity); and 3) offer a diverse range of employment and livelihood opportunities, reduce risks, prevent crises, avert major development setbacks, and promote human security, as well as address humanitarian, peacebuilding, and longer-term development efforts globally (Resilience) (UNDP, 2016).

The concepts of sustainability and resilience have long been part of Thai culture. In 1997, Thailand was in one of its worst-ever economic crises, "the Asian financial crisis," due to its long period of obsession with "growth only" development. At that time, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) came to prominence in responding to the crisis and building a more sustainable and resilient future. The SEP is a Thai development approach, attributed to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, that highlights a balanced way of living based upon three principles—moderation, reasonableness, and resilience — along with the conditions of knowledge and morality.

Moderation ensures people live their lives following the middle path of not too much and not too little. This middle path of living occurs when people have reasonableness, which means they must be aware of the consequences of their actions for themselves and others. Resilience refers to the ability of people to protect themselves against any external turbulence and cope with events that are unpredictable or uncontrollable. It implies a foundation of self-reliance, as well as self-discipline. The SEP conveys new development theory in addressing current development challenges, including human capital, institutions, environmental issues, and the role of government. This philosophy serves as a new paradigm of development, aimed at improving human capital as a development goal (Mongsawad, 2010). His Majesty frequently used the phrase "explosion from within" to stress the importance of people's empowerment in the development pathway, that is, to make individuals and families in communities strong and ready first. When people are internally ready, they will successfully respond to and recover from exposures from the outside world. The unreadiness of communities in responding to external challenges tends to lead to the community's failure.[7]

Based on the above, it clearly appears that the principles guiding SEP are very much aligned to the ones of the Millennium Declaration, which served as the basis for the MDGs. Acknowledging this, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan awarded H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007. The relevance of SEP was again confirmed with the adoption in 2015 of Agenda 2030, which highlights the same key values and principles to guide development.

Smart Cities – Applications of Technology to Achieve Sustainable Cities

Technology played a major role in how people envisioned cities after World War II, followed by the birth of the Internet in the 1960s and growing use of computers in the 1970s. The term "smart city" appears in the literature as early as the 1990s. The growth

[7] http://www.rdpb.go.th/en/King/principles-of-hm-s-development-works-c24/explosion-from-within-v163

of technology, particularly the "Internet of things," has made the vision of using real-time data to maximize the efficiency of urban services become possible. However, there have been criticisms that the use of technology in smart cities has lacked clear objectives and has been driven primarily by private sector interests (UN-Habitat, 2021).

As envisioned by UN-Habitat, smart cities can have tremendous positive impact on people lives, but only when people are at the center of the development process (UN-Habitat, 2021). This concept sits in the United Nations' vision: to build cities where people are at the core of development.

The concept of smart cities lies at the heart of modern urban development strategy in Thailand. The Thailand 4.0 Agenda, the Twenty-Year National Strategy (2018-2037), and the Master Plan under the National Strategy on Smart Livable Cities emphasize the role of innovative technology in creating "smart livable cities" to promote prosperity redistribution and inequality reduction, environmental quality, and societal, cultural, and landscape sustainability (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council [NESDC], 2019a). In addition, the Digital Economy Development Master Plan envisions "Smart Cities" as a digital infrastructure to promote digital innovation.[8] Under the plan, a Smart City encompasses three basic concepts: citizens at the center, technology in the background; people-public-private-partnerships (PPPP); and simultaneous development (Nimmanphatcharin et al., 2021).

The concepts of a smart city in Thailand replicate those under the UN frameworks. A smart city should tackle poverty and inequality issues, enabling the spread of prosperity and inequality reduction and achieving a sustainable city development pathway. A smart city is inclusive, which ensures the centrality of the needs of all people, and that people of all groups have equal opportunity to access sustainable livelihood and participate in city planning and decision-making. A "people" element is introduced to the commonly known concept of public-private-partnership (PPP) to illustrate the essentiality of including people in communication, therefore galvanizing their participation and support in the city development process. Finally, a smart city entails simultaneous development, effective governance, and reasonable environmental control and management, facilitating better adaptation to socioeconomic and environmental challenges and creating more flexibility and resilience.

As cities have their uniqueness and are different in development parameters, thus urban development must account for multiple factors that shape the city, such as society, economy, environment, and governance. Well-planned government policies toward sustainable urban growth can help ensure that the benefits of urbanization are shared equitably. Urban growth policies should respond to the needs of all citizens. These include policies for women to ensure equal access to services, property rights, and political participation; for youth to provide

[8] The Digital Economy Development Master Plan (2018-2022) and Guidelines for Smart City Development follow the Announcement of the Smart City Development Steering Committee No. 1/2019 on Evaluation Criteria and Qualifications, Methods and Process for Considering Smart City.

education and employment; for older persons to promote healthy ageing; and for persons with disabilities on accessible housing, public infrastructure, and transport, focusing on the urban poor and other vulnerable groups, including indigenous people (UN, 2018).

To support the vision of utilizing technology to achieve sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat has worked closely with Hatyai City Municipality to develop the city's action plan to improve safety and security using public safety technology while respecting citizens' privacy under ASEAN's vision on sustainable urban development, namely ASEAN Sustainable Urbanization Strategy (ASUS). The action shall foster connectivity among ASEAN countries based on the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025. UN-Habitat has also worked closely with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) to develop an integrated data system that promotes interdivisional decisions within the BMA, a decision support system for flood management, and transit-oriented development approaches and integration of transport modes at Bangwa BTS Station. These actions are aligned to serve one purpose: to promote sustainable urban development that empowers people.

Thailand's next chapter of urban planning needs to emphasize the bottom-up and participatory approaches that would facilitate public participation of people affected by decisions to respect citizen-centric governance. There are multiple studies on implications and effectiveness of participatory and integrated approaches in community development planning, such as Phanumat et al. (2015), Friend et al. (2016), Tiyawongsuwan (2018), Laothammajak & Sachdev (2021), and Kongboon et al. (2021). An integrated system approach is critical in designing and adopting national sustainable development strategies and plans that integrate environmental, social, and economic dimensions and recognize their interlinkages (UN, 2015b). Both the participatory and integrated system approaches would allow all people to play meaningful roles in building a modern city that balances economic, social, and environmental spheres of sustainability. Integrated urban planning through the whole of society and the whole of government approach would serve as a solid groundwork for building a pathway for city development that reflects and corresponds to local potentials, assuring a sustainable, inclusive, resilient city that ensures no one is left behind.

Local Empowerment through Decentralization

Modern urban and regional planning is concentrated around decentralization as a driver of local government planning on future cities. In Thailand, the idea of urban planning could either reflect global political and economic paradigms or be restricted to the national political and economic system. Significantly, urban development moves with political decentralization that diffuses political power towards local administration. Decentralization is the core of urban and regional planning and requires local consensus through local election processes. With a changing political economy and Thai people's improving awareness and literacy of autonomy, it is essential that local governance respond to the changes in economic, social, and political environments

of the country to enable effective and responsive local administrations that best serve the citizens' needs and promote local participation (Tuansiri, 2021).

Decentralization in Thailand can be traced back to the end of 19th century. During the reign of King Rama V there were attempts to modernize the country's administration, including the establishment of *sukhapiban* or sanitary districts in 1897. A sanitary district is a form of local administration borrowed from England. However, such districts were established in only a few major cities. Administration during this period was very much centralized.

Decentralization and promotion of local administration fully started after the transition of Siam into a constitutional monarchy in 1932. *Tessaban*, a form of local administration, were first established under the Tessaban Organization Act of 1933 with minimum population of 30,000 and population density of 1,000 per square kilometer. The minimum requirements have been scaled up in accordance with higher urbanization rate. Currently, a *tessaban nakhon* (city municipality) must have a minimum population of 50,000, and a *tessaban mueang* (town municipality) must have a minimum population of 10,000. Due to the minimum requirements of population and population density, tessaban boundaries are used as a proxy for urban areas by the National Statistical Office.

In addition to tessaban, the special administrative districts of Bangkok and Pattaya were established in 1975 and 1978, respectively. The cities have been granted authority for the provision of transportation services, urban planning, waste management, housing, roads and highways, security services, and the environment. They are also granted the power to make local legislation and elect their chief executives—the Bangkok governor and the Pattaya mayor.

Implementation of decentralization increased after the enactment of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 [1997]. The constitution clearly mandated authorities to arrange for mayor elections. Local administrations received the authority to collect taxes and manage their own budgets, as well as the responsibility to protect local culture and the local environment. Stronger decentralization policies were developed along with the acceleration of urbanization after the 1990s.

The transfer of functions and budgets from the national government to local government through decentralization would help balance differences in resource distribution across the country. Fiscal decentralization addresses social and economic disparities that may have arisen from the spatial development of cities. If well designed, decentralization facilitates the process of reallocating the government budget and responsibilities to local administrations for delivering public services to local people and providing more immediate and responsive actions specific to each local community's needs and priorities.

The way we look at urbanization may shape the way we plan urban areas. The definition of urban areas differs from country to country. Urban areas can be considered from different angles, such as population threshold, population density, administrative boundaries, economic characteristics, or multiple criteria together.

Even minimum population thresholds can be very different. In Japan, a city's minimum population is 100,000 while the threshold number is only 200 people in Sweden. In Thailand, the National Statistical Office (NSO) considers tessaban a proxy of urban area because of the overlapping population characteristics of urban areas and tessaban. Other agencies apply different definitions. Observed by NSO, Thailand's urban definitions are defined by administrative purpose, which is not suitable for statistical understanding and policy making. There should be a statistically accurate urban-rural definition for infrastructure planning, budget allocation, and efficient vertical-horizontal administration.

Introduction of a new methodology to define urban areas might affect policy making processes. Instead of using various definitions including administrative boundaries, the Degree of Urbanization, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission, proposes classifying each 1 km x 1 km area as "city," "town," "semi-dense," or "rural" area based on its population density (UN-Habitat, 2021). Thailand participated in a regional workshop representing the methodology in 2019. With the new method, the urban-rural continuum can be considered in a more harmonized manner. Instead of an unnatural division between in-tessaban and out-of-tessaban, new data would allow readers to have a clearer picture of a city's population distribution and gradual transition from urban center to rural areas. Accessibility of urban services can be monitored more precisely. Instead of looking at district level from a service provision perspective, the new data would allow us to be more focused on service accessibility at smaller scale, and less from a top-down administrative lens.

The enactment of decentralization-related regulations and the change of urban definition would reflect the need for decentralized administration that is suitable to the urbanization trend. Decentralization allows decisions and actions to happen at the local level. Matters can be considered more thoroughly at smaller scale and decentralization invites people to engage in the development process. It also serves Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to promote resilience and self-immunity, when people have the ability to understand their local context and are able to protect themselves from internal and external risks with local knowledge and wisdom.

Decentralization may be a path towards people's empowerment, by providing opportunities for local governments to have greater authority and for people to engage in local action. Empowerment of people cannot stop at decentralization. To have a city that is inclusive for everyone, we need to think about the future vision for cities, and how to achieve the future in a more sustainable manner.

SDG Localization as a Tool to Support Decentralization and Empower Local Action

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs highlight the roles of local governments and their involvement in city planning for achieving SDGs. Decentralization brings about local autonomy and people's empowerment and participation, which serve as fundamentals to implementing the SDGs, thus reinforcing the process of localizing the SDGs in a city. SDG

localization would explain how the local government's institutional arrangements, integrated planning, and fiscal framework influence their effectiveness in contributing to the SDGs.

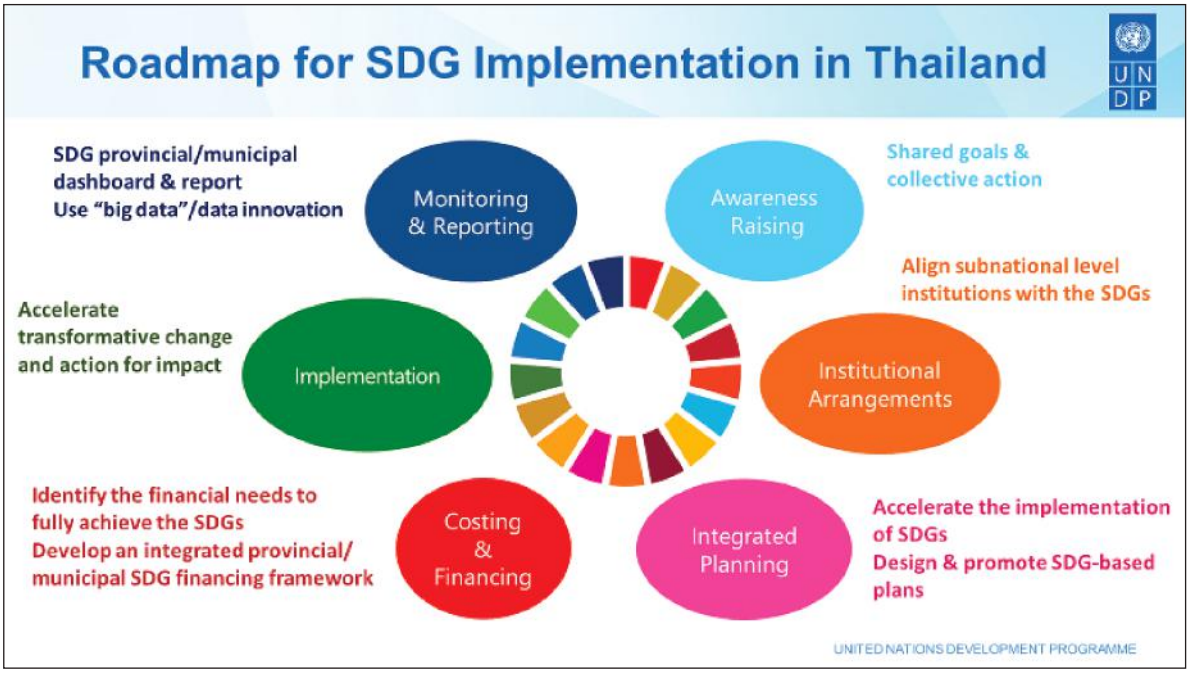
SDG localization has been described as "the process of defining, implementing, and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and subnational sustainable development goals" (UN Development Group, 2014). It includes "the process of taking into account sub-national contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets to determining the means of implementation and using indicators that measure and monitor progress."

While the concepts of SDGs are global, concrete achievements rely largely upon their implementation in or by cities. Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon sent a clear message recognizing that, in a rapidly urbanizing world, "our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities." Most of the SDGs have targets directly related to the responsibilities of cities and local governments, particularly to their role in delivering essential services and providing better responses to the needs of the people.

Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs

Localizing the SDGs goes beyond the translation of the global Sustainable Development Agenda to the local level. It underlines the co-creation of solutions through partnerships and collaborative actions in achieving more inclusive, needs-driven, and community-based responses to challenges. The integration of SDGs in subnational level planning is a crucial step in landing the new agenda that would support inclusiveness, sustainability, and resilience as characteristics of a "city of the future."

Figure 2
Roadmap for SDG Implementation in Thailand



Localizing the SDGs comprises six activities: Awareness Raising, Institutional Arrangements, Integrated Planning, Costing and Financing, Implementation, and Monitoring and Reporting.

Awareness Raising serves to empower people to participate in the achievement of the SDGs in their daily lives. The local government plays a crucial role in raising awareness of the importance and relevance of SDGs to local communities. SDGs should be viewed as shared goals driven by citizen participation and collective action of citizens, governments of all levels, local businesses, non-profit organizations, and academia. Human rights principles (universality, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation, accountability) need to be translated into local practice to guide city development that allows duty-bearers to meet their obligations and rights-holders to claim their rights.

Institutional Arrangements help establish coordination mechanisms at the subnational level that include all key stakeholders to ensure a whole-of-society approach and the Leave No One Behind principle. Governors/mayors assume a leading role and assign focal persons to be in charge of overall coordination in the process and implementation of SDG localization. This advocacy helps promote local ownership of the national strategies.

Integrated Planning refers to integrating the SDG lens into city (provincial/municipal) development plans and incorporating SDG indicators in subnational statistics and indicators, which would facilitate the monitoring and reporting of SDG implementation compared to the goals.

Costing and Financing are crucial for the sustainable development of a city. Cities must identify financial needs and gaps to fully achieve the SDGs. This can be done by exercising development financial assessment at the provincial/municipal level to build an integrated provincial/municipal SDG financing framework. This framework serves as an overarching local financing strategy towards better mobilization and realignment of financial resources to support inclusive, sustainable, and resilient development at subnational levels.

Implementation of SDG localization translates the city development process and plan to reality, accelerating transformative changes and actions for impacts. Localizing the SDGs requires participation from all stakeholders, including government, the private sector, civil society, community-based organizations, individuals, and other development partners. Collective action must be driven at the local level.

Monitoring and Reporting allow the city to monitor and maintain focus on the progress and achievement of the development plan. The use of digital innovation such as big data and open data, as well as the introduction of an SDG provincial/municipal dashboard, could facilitate effective monitoring and reporting at the local level. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals have provided an opportunity for local and regional governments to contribute to achieving global targets. As local governments become increasingly aware of their roles in community development, they are taking a step further in monitoring and reporting on the progress they have been making in localizing the SDGs and the other

global agendas. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) offer a bird's eye view on the work of local governments, helping them synergize their existing strategies, identify policy gaps, and create partnerships with multiple stakeholders. It is essential to ensure that local governments are empowered and actively participate in all steps of the development process: in the planning, implementation, follow-up, and monitoring of the localization strategies and priorities. Disaggregated data is crucial to tailoring development strategies regarding specific localities across different groups of vulnerabilities. VLRs should be seen as an opportunity to revise policy decisions and create more traction and wider ownership of goals. VLRs are the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of SDGs at the local level, mechanisms of transparency and accountability to promote civic involvement, and tools for boosting joint ownership of the universal agendas (UCLG & UN-Habitat, 2020). The 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) consolidated the prime role of VLRs in localizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A record number of local governments – 27 cites –presented a 2021 VLR by July 2021 according to UN-Habitat.

In conclusion, subnational governments bridge the gap between central governments and local communities and foster the involvement of all other stakeholders - the private sector, academia, civil society organizations, and other community-based organizations. Awareness-raising empowers citizens to participate in the planning, decision-making, and achievement of the SDGs. Locally elected leaders, with their democratic mandate and accountability, lead and implement local development. Good monitoring and reporting enhance the efficiency of the whole process of integrated planning and implementation at the local level. Thus, municipal and regional governments should be supported in integrating the 2030 Agenda into their framework, mechanism setup, and implementation that enable citizen participation and institutional accountability (UNDP & UN-Habitat, 2016).

Localizing the SDGs in Thailand

SDG localization in Thailand is exercised at the national and local levels. At the national level, the focus is on legislation, institutional arrangements, policy, financing, and monitoring. At the local level, UNDP and its partners engage in capacity building for the SDGs, integrity and transparency, supporting engagement by local communities to encourage civil participation, youth engagement for inclusive planning, business continuity planning, and promoting women's local leadership. Strong focus will be put on SDG data and monitoring, which is critical for an evidence-based approach at both sub-national and national level with a flexible approach adopted to best suit sub-national priorities.

As such, this initiative will support the following efforts, among others:

- facilitate engagement between state and non-state actors to accelerate the SDG agenda at the local level;
- support civil society and facilitate engagement and collaboration between government and civil society organizations to promote civic space;

- provide policy, advocacy, and capacity building support at the national and sub-national level to strengthen SDG localization systems and processes, and set the agenda for localizing the SDGs, including mechanisms and tools to finance, implement, and monitor progress at central, provincial, and local levels;
- engage with partners on topics related to the SDG agenda and SDG localization with a strong focus on vulnerable groups, gender equality, and social inclusion;
- accelerate climate and biodiversity action through participatory engagement and collaboration of SDG localization supporting national targets and goals related to the UN Conventions;
- foster initiatives on South-South and triangular cooperation, innovation, and knowledge management related to SDG localization.

The United Nations takes this initiative forward with the support of key partners. UNDP works with the Royal Thai Government in line with the foundational principle of national ownership, the primary national counterpart on SDGs being Thailand's national planning agency, the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC).

At the national level, UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Municipal League of Thailand in September 2021 and an MOU with the Secretariat of the House of Representatives in August 2020. Also, in April 2022, UNDP signed another MOU with the Department of Local Administration to bolster the partnership for SDG localization and support these actors' core functions to accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs in Thailand. The MOUs with these key actors will enable UNDP to provide platforms that bring national and sub-national actors together, ensure synergies between national and sub-national plans and policies, and promote both top-down and bottom-up approaches to development. UNDP has already provided technical support and capacity building to members of parliament and parliamentary staff on climate finance and on SDG budgeting for the Review of the Annual Budget Appropriations Bill, and is currently working with the Thai parliament on dialogue between parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and youth concerning decentralization and local administration in Thailand. At the sub-national level, partnerships with elected officials, local administrative organizations, line ministries, the Children and Youth Council of Thailand and its provincial branches, civil society organizations, and human rights sub-national offices will be crucial. For active engagement of the private sector, the existing partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce of Thailand and the Federation of Thai Industries and their provincial chapters will be leveraged. These actors, along with other key stakeholders, will be crucial to the process, and UNDP will capitalize on already well-established platforms to ensure a "whole of society" approach is taken, covering a wide and diverse range of geographical areas.

In order to support the country's public policy planning and strengthen the localization of SDGs, "Thailand Policy Lab" (TP Lab) was established by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council and UNDP in September 2020 with the aim of introducing an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to public policymaking and public service delivery in Thailand. TP Lab's approach of applying innovative approaches and tools to tap into the insights and knowledge of the people closest to problems and solutions could offer co-created, people-led policy development.

In 2021 a Civil Society Advisory Committee was institutionalized to highlight the importance of partnership. This committee serves as a platform for dialogue and consultation between UNDP and representatives from Thai civil society to guide the implementation of our future work on issues critical to human development and the achievement of the SDGs, including SDG localization.

SDG localization is also integrated in the UN's engagement of all partners. An SDG localization session was offered in the Leave No One Behind Pilot Cities Workshops organized by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and UN-Habitat in November 2021 in Chiang Mai, Hatyai, and Khon Kaen. Stakeholders related to housing and sustainable urban development were invited to discuss how local actions and stakeholders can engage in achieving sustainable development together.

Being part of the UN family, UNDP and UN-Habitat work with other UN agencies based on their respective mandates for their added value to deliver a solid One UN Approach to SDG localization in Thailand, bringing in actors such as UN Women on gender equality, UNHCR on issues of refugees and statelessness, and IOM on migration to contribute their specific expertise to UNDP's interventions.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Urbanization represents the future where cities around the world are growing and evolving at an unprecedented rate. With COVID-19 disproportionately affecting urban areas, there is an urgent need to reshape city development plans to be more responsive to addressing the needs and desires of citizens. Citizen centric, participatory approach, and integrated approach are mandatory to enhance the engagement and empowerment of citizens in urban development planning to ensure better service delivery and people-led decision-making. Urban strategy and planning need to integrate economic, social, and environmental aspects of a city's development to find the best balance for its development pathway. A smart city concept sets out a corridor for a sustainable development strategy toward "a City of the Future" that is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient. A future city provides inclusive and responsive public service delivery and involves citizens in decision-making, especially the most vulnerable people whose needs are less addressed.

Lessons from global experiences of health crises confirm a long-term impact that profoundly deepens inequalities and undoes progress on sustainable development.

Lessons also show that effective response must be taken immediately and proactively, driven by solidarity, science, and human rights. It is critical that countries engage in timely and effective responses to minimize SDG regression and recovery time. Key to achieving this is to target vulnerable groups from the outset in line with the logic of a human-centered development framework, "leave no one behind," and human rights principles.

COVID-19 has also revealed the vulnerability of global systems meant to protect the environment, society, and the economy. There is an increasing recognition of how multiple economic, social, and institutional drivers exacerbate environmental risks, impacting human health and increasing the burden on health services. Climate change and environmental challenges could aggravate the severity of socio-economic difficulties, especially for the most vulnerable. Transformational and green urban development will be an early action on a longer-term agenda to address climate change, avoid habitat loss and fragmentation, reverse the loss of biodiversity, reduce pollution, and improve waste management and infrastructure, leading to positive spillovers to other socioeconomic aspects of sustainable development.

City planning will require a sustained effort by the whole nation, through collective action from the bottom up, empowering people, communities, and businesses to develop their own potential and ensuring they have their right to speak and act. The government needs to break down the structures and barriers that currently disempower people or hinder their empowerment. Shifting power and resources from central to local government will increase the opportunities for people to participate in planning and implementing projects that are tailored to the needs and resources of each locality. Protecting people's rights and freedoms will increase their ability to advance development. Elected local government is proven around the world to be an effective mechanism for providing public services that enhance people's lives and ensure people's empowerment. Around twenty years ago, Thailand launched a comprehensive framework of decentralization and local governance but its implementation encountered multiple challenges. It is now time to strengthen this framework to facilitate people's participation in public service decision-making and delivery.

With regard to Thailand's policies for long term sustainable growth, the government emphasizes four strategies—the promotion of Bio-Circular-Green economy model, economic restructuring towards new industries, digitalization, and investment in advanced greener infrastructure (e.g., mass transit systems and cleaner energy) (ESCAP, 2021). The upcoming 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) will emphasize five keys area for transforming the nation, which include restructuring of production into an economy based on innovation that aligns with technology trends and global trade, developing people/human resources to have the ability and quality of life suitable for the new world, creating a society of opportunity and fairness, creating sustainability for the country, and preparing the country to cope with risks and changes in a new global context (NESDC, 2022). In Glasgow during the 26th meeting of the parties to the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Thailand announced its aim to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by or before 2065, presenting its willingness to be more aggressive in addressing climate change. The above pathways communicate Thailand's strong determination and ambition toward green, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban development.

It is very clear that cities will play a major role in achieving this vision. The best way to ensure this is by having empowered people who fulfill their duties as active citizens supported by local administrations benefitting from increased powers, budgets, and means to respond to the aspirations of the people, fully applying the principle of subsidiarity.

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Reimagining Bangkok: Embracing Inclusive Economy

*Narumol Nirathron**

Abstract

Revival of street vending, which in principle has been dislocated from Bangkok public spaces, has been proposed as a strategy to revive the post-COVID economy. The initiative can be regarded both as a strategy to revive the economy and as a path to an inclusive city. Nevertheless, implementation is not easy considering differences in public opinion about the use of public space for commercial purposes, unsightliness, and obstruction of thoroughfares, not to mention the unfriendly policy at the city level. To support the initiative, the paper presents the relevant conceptual framework, the past and present situation of street vending in Bangkok, and the municipal administration of street vending over the years which reflects the ambivalent attitude towards street vending. The paper discusses regulatory issues and other concerns along with propositions from many agencies that support a street stall economy. Findings from the research on the role of informal economy toward urban economy conducted from 2020 to 2021 will be presented to provide insights into the current situation. The research employed a mixed-method approach, with data collected from 150 street vendors and 300 customers in three districts of Bangkok, and 150 market vendors in 18 markets that supply materials to street vendors. Informants were selected by accidental sampling. The research reaffirmed the situation of street vending before and after the onset of the pandemic. The paper concludes by listing the challenges to be addressed to reinstate street vending and to attain inclusive economy.

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Keywords: Inclusive economy, street vending, economic revival, management of street vending, smart regulation

Introduction

A street vending stall is defined as a location in the public space, including building, table, stall, mat, ground, boat, or raft for selling food, ice, or other merchandise.[1] Street vending is regarded as part of the "grassroots economy"[2] and is a vital part of the informal economy. In economic terms, street vending provides earning opportunities to those who have limited access to employment. Street food is part of Thai food culture, which attracts tourists and has a part in promoting tourism in Bangkok. Street vending also puts "eyes on the street," providing "human" surveillance for the general public. On the other side of the coin, vending in public spaces creates controversy. It is one of the major urban questions in many cities including Bangkok. For Bangkok, debates and attempts to remove street vending from the city have taken place since the creation of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) special administrative area in 1972. The subsequent five decades have witnessed the struggle between proponents and critics of street stalls, leaving little room to address real problems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the economies of many countries. Countries that were previously unfriendly toward the street stall economy have turned to promote street vending, realizing the role of street vending in stimulating the economy and reducing poverty and inequality (Fabian, 2020; Global Times, 2020; AsiaNews, 2020; Allison et al., 2021). China, which earlier also tried to abolish street stalls, has been successful in reintroducing street vending to reboot its economy, though some important challenges need to be worked out (Song, 2020).

The aim of this paper is to support the return of street vending, not only to revive the economy, but also to create employment, reduce inequality, and support certain aspects of society and culture. The paper has seven sections. After the introduction, the following section outlines the conceptual framework relevant to street vending and its management. The third section presents the

[1] The 1976 Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act differentiates between fixed and mobile vendors. The mobile vendor is defined as a hawker who sells food or ice on land or in a canal. A fixed or static vending unit is defined as a "stall in a public space or building, mat, ground, boat, or boathouse for selling food, ice, or other items." The BMA's definition implies that food was a major commodity of street vendors at that time.

[2] In 2018, the Thai Government launched the 20-year National Strategy (2018-2037). One of the 23 Master Plans to achieve the National Strategy is the "grassroots economy" which the plan sees as the population in the lower 40% income bracket. The plan aims to empower entrepreneurial competencies and create an enabling environment for grassroots economy (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019).

past and current situation regarding the management of street vending, and will be divided into three periods. The time span of this section starts with the establishment of the BMA in 1972 and covers the period to 2014, which was the starting point of the "return pavements to pedestrians" policy, then addresses the period 2014 to 2019, which saw a counter movement and the emergence of "allies" in efforts to have the BMA reconsider its stance, before concluding with the pandemic period, 2020 to the present. The fourth section presents research findings from 2021 that reaffirm findings from previous research and point out some regulatory issues. It portrays the situation of vendors in the time of the pandemic. The findings thus support the initiative. Discussion is presented in the fifth section, and the sixth section addresses management issues and challenges to using street vending to revive the economy and make it inclusive. The final section presents concluding remarks.

Conceptual Framework

The situation of street vending in Bangkok can be understood through various schools of thought concerning the development of street vending, the perspective of street vending, the legal policy framework, and the inclusive economy.

Schools of Thought on the Development of Street Vending

Two schools of thought that should be mentioned as relevant to street vending are the schools of thought on the informal economy and street entrepreneurship.

The school of thought on the informal economy builds on Chen's 2012 work on informal economy.[3] A new category of "inclusionist" school, which advocates the need for inclusive urban planning and collective organization, has been added (Brown & McGranahan, 2016; Nirathron & Yasmeen, 2019).

There are four schools of thought on street entrepreneurship. The modernist school assumes that street hawkers and peddlers are a remnant from an earlier, pre-modern, era. Their persistence reflects "under-development," "traditionalism," and "backwardness." The structuralist perspective depicts street vending as a survival practice conducted out of economic necessity due to the absence of alternative means of livelihood. The neo-liberal perspective views street vending as the people's spontaneous and creative response to the state's incapacity to satisfy people's basic needs (Williams & Gurtoo, 2012).

A Comprehensive Perspective on Street Vending

Apart from the schools of thought, understanding of street vending requires a

[3] One school of thought on the informal economy is the dualist school, which sees informal economy activities as pre-modern, temporary, and survivalist; the structuralist school sees the informal economy as supporting the growth of the formal economy by exploiting unprotected informal workers. The legalist school asserts that the self-employed in the informal economy prefer to be informal due to excessive state regulation. The voluntarist school focuses on opportunistic informal producers and traders who choose to operate informally after weighing the costs and benefits of informality versus formality (Nirathron & Yasmeen, 2019).

comprehensive perspective on street vending as depicted in Table 1. A comprehensive view takes into consideration multiple aspects such as temporal dimensions, employment status, legal status, economic status, skills levels, types of goods sold, and reasons for vending. This perspective illuminates aspects that inform comprehensive policy related to street vending.

Table 1

A Comprehensive Perspective on Street Vending

Aspects	Categories
Use of Space (McGee, 1970)	1. Focus agglomeration (outside markets, at transportation stations, in the community) 2. Street/pavement 3. Bazaars or periodic markets
Temporary or Permanent (Wakefield et al., 2007)	1. Sideline (by event) 2. Opportunistic (depends on circumstances) 3. Nomadic 4. Traditional transient (on the street or in public spaces)
Type of Employment (Bromley & Gerry, 1979)	1. True self-employment 2. Disguised wage work (earned commissions) 3. Dependent work (depending on company for goods sold)
Legal status (Greenburg et al., 1980)	1. Legitimate vendors (legally registered) 2. Ephemeral vendors (temporary, unregistered) 3. Underground vendors (unregistered, more permanent than ephemeral)
Vendor economic status (Nirathron, 2006)	1. Subsistence level earnings 2. Accumulated capital, preference to maintain size 3. Accumulated capital, desire to expand trade
International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO-08) Designation (International Labour Organization, 2012)	1. group 5212 (Food vendors): Skills level 2 2. Unit group 9520 (Non-food vendors): Skills level 1
Types of goods sold	1. Non-food 2. Food (vegetables, fruit, made to order, ready-made, ready-to-cook, and others)
Reasons for vending	1. Survival strategy 2. Voluntary (including perceived opportunities)

Source: Nirathron (2017)

Legal Framework

In contrast to the comprehensive perspective, the law related to street vending in Bangkok concerns mainly the spatial aspects. At the national level there are three laws that regulate street vending.

The Act on the Maintenance of the Cleanliness and Orderliness of the Country, B.E. 2535 [1992] prohibits food preparation and sale of goods in public spaces; designation of locations for vending is possible with the approval of a traffic officer.[4]

The Public Health Act, B.E. 2535 [1992] prohibits sale of goods in public places or ways whether by means of displaying goods at a regular spot or by peddling except with a license being obtained from the local official. Local officials with approval of the traffic official have the power to designate an area of a public place or way in which sale or purchase of goods is strictly prohibited.[5]

3. The Land Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 [1979] prohibits buying and selling on a road, or in the middle of a path without reasonable justification or in a manner obstructing traffic. Permission can be given in case of necessity and on temporary basis.[6]

At city level, the following key ordinance and directive regulate street vendors.

The BMA Ordinance on Selling in Public Spaces, B.E. 2545 [2002] outlines rules regarding sellers, their helpers, stalls, and the environment. Importantly, the ordinance stipulates approved practices concerning street food vending in the aspects of food sellers and food sanitation. Vendors must seek vending permission and

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[4] Section 20 prohibits food preparation and selling of goods in public spaces, either in a fixed spot or mobile. Violators are liable for penalty not exceeding 2,000 baht. Designation of location for vending is possible with the approval of a traffic officer. Section 39 prohibits installation, drying, placing, or hanging of anything in public unless permitted by authorized local officers.

[5] Chapter 9 deals with sale of goods in public places or ways. Section 41 stipulates that the local competent official has the duty to control and oversee public places or ways for common use of the general public. No person shall sell goods in a public place or way whether by means of displaying goods at a regular spot or by peddling except with a license obtained from the local official. Section 42 stipulates that the local official with approval of the traffic official has the power to designate an area of a public place or way in which sale or purchase of goods is strictly prohibited. Section 43 authorizes the local government to issue local ordinances prescribing criteria on a broad range of matters related to selling food and goods: personal hygiene conditions of goods sellers and their assistants; the process used in selling, making, preparing, cooking, keeping, or storing food or other goods including maintenance of cleanliness or containers, utility water, and any utensils; standards for display of goods and peddling of goods in public places or ways; time for sale of goods; other measures necessary for the maintenance of cleanliness and for the prevention of health hazards.

[6] Section 109. No person shall act anything whatsoever on any pavement or path provided for pedestrians in the manner obstructing other person without reasonable justification *[sic]*.

Section 110. No person shall buy, sell, distribute, or solicit donations on the road, or in the middle of the path without reasonable justification or in the manner obstructing traffic.

Section 114 prohibits installing, placing, or hanging any items that obstruct traffic unless permitted by traffic officers. Temporary permission can be given in case of necessity.

obtain a license, which has to be renewed annually. The ordinance is presently in force. Requirements as stipulated in the ordinance can be implemented only with the availability of utilities such as water and appropriate garbage handling.

The BMA Directive on Methods and Conditions of Determination of Designated Areas and Selling in Public Areas, dated 28 January B.E. 2563 [2020] is a new directive concerned with selling in the public space. The directive does not apply to "special" areas such as tourism areas or areas with cultural identity. The directive was introduced, in part, as a response to an urgent policy announced by the prime minister in 2019. In brief, the directive stipulates a minimum size of areas to be designated for vending; conditions of approval; size of stalls; duration of permission; qualifications of sellers and helpers; application and selection procedures; conditions and rules of operation; fees to be applied; broad guidelines for self-regulation; annual revision of suitability of areas; and areas in which vending is strictly prohibited. District offices are in charge of the procedure, but final decision on granting permission depends on the Committee on the Maintenance of Orderliness of Bangkok, which is chaired by the governor.

In principle the directive is a testimony to the BMA's approval of the use of public space for vending, though approval has to be endorsed by a traffic officer. There are also issues that are cause for concern as they may affect the prospects of vendors and the public benefitting from the policy. 1) The directive does not stipulate the time frame for the whole procedure, so vendors who apply for permission never know when the permission will be granted. 2) Besides the matter of ensuring the physical conditions of vending, consent to use the space for vending must be secured from the majority of stakeholdes[7] by means of public hearing or other methods conducted by a local higher education institution or the district office. This casts doubt on the neutrality of the procedure as the district may have its own interests. 3) The directive requires zoning by merchandise type, which, from a practical perspective, may affect the liveliness of the area and create competition among vendors that eventually affects the quality of the merchandise sold. Zoning also limits flexibility should the vendors need to change merchandise, which is often the case. 4) The BMA will revise permissions for use of the space annually. Thus the duration of permission is too short for business to establish themselves and may affect the opportunity to get loans from formal financial institutions, excluding vendors with limited capital or forcing them to resort to informal creditors. 5) Regarding regulation of operations, the directive allows vendors to have three to ten representatives co-monitor vendors in the area, the representatives are selected by the district office rather than having the vendors participate in a selection process. Furthermore, the roles of the representatives are not clearly stated. 6) Finally, the directive gives the governor

[7] The stakeholders are namely owners of the buildings in the area; passers-by and pedestrians; people who live within a 500-meters radius around the selling area; and people who work within a 500-meters radius around the selling area.

authority to use his discretion should there be any problem in the enforcement of the directive or under specific circumstances. This can be seen as both an opportunity and a threat as the exercise of discretion may arbitrarily benefit or harm the vendors.

Policy Framework

Two development plans for the city are the BMA's 12-Year Development Plan (2009-2021) and the 20-year-vision that spans from 2012-2032 and envisages Bangkok as "Vibrant of Asia" *[sic]*. The 20-year vision aims to achieve an "inclusive city." Ambitious strategies include registering informal workers, fostering social welfare for informal workers, promoting quality street vending to achieve local and international customers' satisfaction, complying with vending regulations, and promoting income security for street vendors (Tangworamongkon, 2014). At policy level, the administration of the BMA is guided by the BMA 5-Year Plan, which runs parallel with the National Economic and Social Development Plan.[8] Nevertheless, the policies concerning street vending depend on individual governors.

Inclusive Economy

In this article, inclusive economy is defined as an economy in which there is expanded opportunity for more broadly shared prosperity, especially for those facing the greatest barriers to advancing their well-being (Pacetti, n.d.)

Street Vending in Bangkok, Past and Present

This section presents the past and present situation of street vending in Bangkok. The timeline will be arranged in three periods: from the establishment of the BMA to 2014; from 2014's "return pavements to pedestrians" measure to 2019; and 3) the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 to the present. During this time, positive and negative measures were implemented10 depending on the economic situation of the moment (Nirathron, 2014; Yasmeen & Nirathron, 2014; Nirathron & Yasmeen, 2019). Relevant research findings will be presented where necessary.

1973 to 2014's "Return Pavements to Pedestrians" Measure

The situation in this period can be summarized as follows.

1973-1977: This period represents the attempt to regulate. BMA enacted ordinances on the regulation of street vending. The ordinances prohibited vending in public spaces without permission. Temporary permission was granted in some areas.

1977-1981: Strict measures were compromised due to the oil crisis. The 1st BMA Plan (1977-1981) promoted petty enterprise to alleviate poverty through provision of seed money. At the national level, the 4th National Economic and Social

[8] The National and BMA plans are synchronized to the same five-year period. The 1st BMA Plan was implemented in the period of the 4th National Economic and Social Development Plan.

[9] Data from 1973 to 2014 derives from an article by the author and Gisele Yasmeen titled "Street vending management in Bangkok: the need to adapt to a changing environment" published in 2019 in the *Journal of Public Space,* Vol. 4 No. 1, pp.15-32.

Development Plan (1977-1981) promoted self-employment. The BMA established the City Police Unit in 1978 to maintain peace and security of the city and monitor street vending. Individuals who claimed that they could negotiate with officials for permission to sell were arrested.

1981-1985: Strict supervision was undertaken, along with the promotion of self-employment at the national and local levels to alleviate poverty.

1985-1992: Strict policy shifted to a more friendly policy due to the arrival of a new governor. The friendly policy came along with three conditions of cleanliness, safety, and orderliness. The City Law Office was set up in 1986 to replace the City Police Unit. The office was assigned to monitor street vending, along with other responsibilities. Policies on safety and cleaning were issued for a convenient and safe co-existence between pedestrians and street vendors. Vendors were asked to stop selling on Wednesdays in order to clean the selling areas. In this period, the 5th and 6th National Economic and Social Development Plans (1982-1986; 1987-1991) regarded "petty enterprise" as a means to reduce poverty and promoted self-employment in various forms. The 2nd and 3rd BMA Plans, which were implemented in the same period, also promoted petty enterprise to alleviate poverty through provision of seed money.

1992-1996: Two important bills concerning street vending were enacted in 1992. The Act on the Maintenance of the Cleanliness and Orderliness of the Country, B.E. 2535 [1992] authorized the BMA, with the approval of the traffic police, to designate public spaces for vending. The Public Health Act, B.E. 2535 [1992] authorized the BMA to designate areas in which vending is prohibited. The law also authorized the BMA to issue ordinances prescribing criteria on hygienic conditions for food selling.[10] In this period guidelines on the areas in which vending was permitted or prohibited were designated. Cleaning day was changed to Monday with the change in governor. Cleaning fees were instituted. The 4th BMA Plan (1992-1996) set the goal of reducing the number of street vendors in all districts. Ironically, in the same plan, petty trade was regarded as a means to reduce poverty. At national level, the 7th National Plan (1992-1996) listed petty traders as one of the six groups of poorest people that should receive special attention. The 5th BMA Plan (1997-2001) aimed to limit the growth of street vendors. The limitations on vending space made some vendors seek ways to have access to the public space. In another development, some vendors started to organize to protect their rights to livelihoods.

1996-2004: After the 5th BMA Plan (1997-2001) there was no explicit policy to limit the number of street vendors. The 8th National Plan (1997-2001) promoted economic security of family. The 6th BMA Plan (2002-2006) still put high regard on economic security of people, highlighting

[10] The conditions are hygienic conditions of sellers, criteria on the process used in selling, making, preparing, cooking, keeping or storing food or other goods including maintaining cleanliness of containers, utility water, and any utensils; criteria on goods display and peddling of goods in public places or ways; time for sale of goods; other measures necessary for the maintenance of cleanliness and for the prevention of health hazards, including the prevention of nuisances and contagious diseases.

skills training for economic self-reliance. The plan was in line with the 9th National Plan (2002-2006), which promoted self-employment and micro-enterprise through skills training and access to capital. The 1997 economic crisis drove many former employees to become street vendors. The government provided 4,000 baht per person as seed money to support small-scale self-employment. The number of arrests and fines in accordance with Article 20 of the Act on the Maintenance of the Cleanliness and Orderliness of the Country increased substantially. A new generation of street vendors emerged in Bangkok (Maneepong & Walsh, 2013). The People's Bank scheme under the supervision of the Government Savings Bank was launched in 2001 to support petty enterprise. In 2002, the BMA Ordinance on Selling in Public Spaces was enforced. In 2003, an asset capitalization measure was launched allowing vending permits to be used as collateral for loans from government banks. This is another accommodating measure to promote petty enterprise, in particular street vending. The attempt to balance between the city's orderliness, cleanliness, and poverty reduction continued in the face of limitations of budget and manpower, intervention from local politicians and influential figures, and lack of good governance from the side of law enforcement personnel.

2004-2008: Legal action against vendors selling outside designated areas continued. Amidst the attempts to restore the city's environment, the number of permitted vending areas increased from 494 locations to 667 locations in 2008. Street vendor committees at district level were established, illustrating that the important stakeholders could participate in the management process, although to a limited extent.

2009-2014: In 2011 the BMA planned a campaign called "Street Vending: Charms of the City" in five areas best known for their "signature" products. In 2012 the BMA and the Metropolitan Police Bureau agreed that street vending was here to stay and restoring orderliness was necessary for the charm of the city and worldwide recognition. This came after *Travel + Leisure* magazine awarded Bangkok the World's Best City Award for the third consecutive year in 2012 (Nirathron, 2014). In 2013 Bangkok witnessed the highest ever number of street vending permits, with 726 locations permitted. In the same year the Facebook group "saynostall" was established to campaign for the right of the public to access pavements, particularly as pedestrians (Nirathron, 2014).

From 2014's "Return Pavements to Pedestrians" Measure to 2019

The highest number ever of permitted locations may have caused complaints in social media about obstruction to foot traffic. In 2014 the campaign "Return Pavements to Pedestrians" was launched. The campaign started as missions to reorganize public space. In some areas, such in front of Central World, Pathumwan District, times at which vending was allowed were rescheduled. But in other areas such as Prachan Road, in front of Thammasat University, vending was completely prohibited. The campaign eventually developed into a ban on street vending in 2016. Thus hundreds of legal vending sites

lost their designated status. As of 2018, there were 185 designated areas left, accommodating 8,163 street vendors.[11] Meanwhile, however, surveys by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) for 2017 and 2018 respectively found 143,838 and 139,149 street vendors in Bangkok (Poonsab et al., 2019). The precise number of vendors evicted or affected by the campaign is unknown. Official figures between 2014 and 2018 indicate that around 12,000 vendors lost their licenses. These figures count only licensed vendors rather the much larger figures presented by WIEGO.

Astudy in 2017 that involved vendors and buyers in four districts of Bangkok found that most vendors had completed no more than nine years of education. More than half of the vendors surveyed had more than 10 years of experience in the vending business. Autonomy and flexibility were cited as reasons for vending. Some vendors cited "good earnings" as their reason for vending, while others cited "having no choice." More than half the vendors sold food. As for the customers, the study found that most of the customers were laborers, 35% of whom earned less than minimum wage. Forty percent of customers reportedly buy from street vendors on a daily basis. The most common reasons cited for purchasing from street vendors were "convenience" and "lower price." Convenience in this sense means that they did not have to spend time looking for goods as time is tight for laborers who have to abide by strict work regulations. The time saved means that they can report to work on time. Study also found that formal business were adversely affected by the ban on street vending. Storeowners in one area surveyed reported business decline of 70% (Nirathron, 2017).

In the same vein of study, Angsuthonsombat (2019) found that street vending enabled workers to live independently without social or family intervention. Many workers who have low educational attainment can build a secure foundation for their families, have access to home and vehicles, and support children through higher education by means of vending. Some had to support their parents and other family members. The ban therefore affected the vendors gravely. The same research found vendors who earned 70% less than they did before the ban. Some vendors adapted by engaging in new jobs such as security guard, domestic worker, or cleaner. Some had to borrow from informal creditors. The elderly had limited alternatives. Some risked selling in their original spaces or smaller alleys (Angsuthonsombat, 2019).

Though the ban was not the first of its kind, this time it created heavy impacts as never before. The scale of operation, which covers all districts, and the duration of operation, which started from 2014 onward, affected thousands of street vendors. Despite the setback, the ban brought with it many developments. First of all, the ban saw the rise of collectivism among street vendors in many districts. Vendors engaged in many efforts, sought legal advice, filed lawsuits in the Administrative Court, petitioned parliamentary committees, organized rallies,

[11] In 2014 there were 665 designated locations accommodating 20,170 vendors. In 2017 there were 232 locations accommodating 10,064 vendors.

staged civil disobedience, and sought advice from academic and non-governmental organizations. This time the counter movement came from many parties: the vendors themselves, government units, academics, and NGOs (Nirathron, 2020).

In 2018 the Central Administrative Court ruled with reference to the Land Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 [1979], that the revocation of licenses was for the sake of the public as the main purpose of pavements is for use by pedestrians. The BMA has already permitted vending for a justified duration. Thus, street vendors should find permanent locations for their businesses.

In the same year the Urgent Law Reform Commission[12] recommended law reform concerning occupations in public spaces to the BMA and the Metropolitan Police Bureau (Urgent Law Reform Commission, 2018). A short-term recommendation was to develop agreements between the agencies concerned, such as BMA, the Traffic Police Division, and the Ministry of Public Health, on the policy and plan to allocate public space for street vending purposes in a clear-cut manner, while the long-term agreement was to set criteria for considering temporarily permitted areas in a clear-cut manner. There should be a committee to develop a plan to use and manage such areas and prescribe fees to be paid to the state for the use of public areas. Urgent efforts should be made to reform laws on the use of public space for occupations.

In 2018, street vendors formed an organization, the Network of Thai Street Vendors for Sustainable Development (NEST), representing 7,000 vendors from 23 districts in Bangkok. NEST's aim was to provide support and solidarity to vendors and protect their rights (Samantrakul & Reed, 2018)[13,14] through several activities including giving interviews, disseminating information, staging rallies and civil disobedience, and meeting with political figures. Nevertheless, due to financial constraints many members refused to participate in the campaigns. Some avoided participating for fear of negative consequences (Nirathron, 2020).

On July 25, 2019, the prime minister delivered his new government's policy address to parliament. The first out of 12 urgent policies was solving livelihood concerns by easing restrictions on occupations for the Thai people, which

[12] The Urgent Law Reform Commission was appointed in 2017 by an order of the prime minister. The commission is chaired by Dr. Borwornsak Uwanno. Its mandate is to provide ideas and recommendations for urgent law reform.

[13] NEST committed to 1) mobilize members to participate in consultations, pilot projects, training, festivals, pedestrian street events, and other events organized by the BMA or district offices; 2) ensuring that members complied with all city-level ordinances regulating vending, including stall size, distance to pedestrian areas, and fees; and 3) ensuring that members adhere to local-level rules, customs, and good practices, including waste management, uniform wearing, and market zoning by product (Network of Thai Street Vendors for Sustainable Development et al., 2018).

[14] In many localities in Bangkok, there are already organizations of street vendors who work together for the well-being of their members. Examples include the Khao-san Road Street Vendors Group, Street Vendors Network of Laem Thong Athlete Village, and Street Vendors Group of Soi On-Nut 70 Market.

would include reviewing arrangements and standards for street stalls and vendors in Bangkok to retain the uniqueness of the city as the "Capital of Street Food", while also maintaining cleanliness and order (Secretariat of the Cabinet, 2019). Nevertheless, at local level, the ban continued even in locations that were formerly labeled as "good models" of street vending, which were zones where vendors organized their stalls in a manner that enabled the flow of foot traffic, managed waste efficiently, and kept the public space clean. There is an example of vendors who tried on their own initiative and with their own resources to improve the public space. Vending permissions in this area were eventually revoked by the BMA and vendors were left to struggle on their own. The same situation happened in other vending locations that earlier were labeled as a "good models" of street vending. One of the explanations that the BMA gave was that the BMA already prepared new locations for the street vendors. It turned out that in many instances the new locations were in remote areas or areas that had low foot traffic. Vendors who were relocated to the new sites eventually abandoned them due to low sales and high expenses. In the same year, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit[15] became involved in the issue to have the urgent policy implemented.

From 2020 to the Present

The COVID-19 pandemic was another blow to Bangkok's street vendors, who already suffered from dislocation. The lockdown that started in March 2020 not only limited vendors' earning activities, but also reduced the number of customers. Earnings were reported to decrease by 80% (WIEGO, 2021). The government provided a relief package that included cash hand-outs, the Half-Half Co-Payment scheme, and special loans offered by the Government Savings Bank.[16] But some vendors could not access the loans. The BMA enforced the Directive on Methods and Conditions of Determination of Designated Areas and Selling in Public Areas, B.E. 2563 [2020], which can be regarded as promoting street vending to some extent. But in many districts public hearings, a procedure required by the directive, turned out to disfavor street vending.

On another front, there were three positive developments. In January 2020 the Senate Standing Committee on Poverty and Inequality Reduction released its Policy Recommendation on the Management of Street Vending in Bangkok for the Promotion of Grassroots Economy, Lives, and Communities. The report estimated that the economic contribution of street vending in Bangkok was 67,728 million baht.[17] The study also indicated that street

[15] The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit is a special unit that supports the government's work in strategic and integrated missions. It focuses on urgent issues that require coordination among government and non-government agencies.

[16] In 2021, a reduction in contributions to Social Security for members covered under Section 40 was approved.

[17] The estimate is based on the number of street vendors (170,000 vendors), days of work by month (20 days), net profit (1,000 baht daily), and the marginal propensity to consume (MPP : 0.66).

vendors spent 70% of their earnings on raw materials, 80% of which were produced locally. This confirms how street vending contributes to economic circulation and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The report proposes that the state should realign its perspective towards street vending. It also provides a comprehensive set of recommendations and short-term and long-term strategies for the management of street vending in Bangkok. The report was submitted to the BMA.

In November 2020, the National Health Commission Office organized the first Bangkok Health Assembly.[18] The assembly endorsed a resolution on "Management of Street Vending and the Common use of Bangkok Public Space" to promote Bangkok as an "Inclusive and Healthy City." The resolution includes five-year goals in the management of street vending, taking into consideration a balance of the benefits and challenges of street vending. The plan includes making recommendations on the revision and implementation of the directive, setting up an area-based mechanism to manage public space, and coordinating among concerned agencies and stakeholders.

In December 2020 the Advisory Board on the Economic and Social Impact in the Centre for COVID19 Situation Administration (CCSA)[19] recommended policy for the management of street vending to revive the economy in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The board proposed that street vending should be promoted to revive the economy. The recommendation for short-term action was to promote street vending to revive the economy. For long-term actions, the board proposed: 1) setting up a national committee for the prescription of policy on the management of street vending; 2) that local administration organizations implement the policy; 3) that government and government agencies look for possible areas for vending; and 4) after the situation returns to normal, another committee should be set up to deliver the policy as above but add the aspects of promotion of the roles of street vending in terms of the economy, culture, society, and uniqueness (Advisory Board on the Economic and Social Impact in the Centre for COVID- 19 Situation Administration, 2020). In responding to the recommendation, the BMA reported actions that have been taken to accommodate street vending. The BMA coordinated with state

[18] A health assembly is a process and platform organized by the National Health Commission Office for developing participatory public policy based on wisdom. It seeks to bring together three sectors – the government sector, the academic sector, and the people's sector – from health and non-health backgrounds to dialogue for healthy public policies and solutions. In Thailand, there are three types of health assembly, namely the National Health Assembly, Area-Based Health Assembly, and the Issue-Based Health Assembly.

[19] The board was appointed following the establishment of the Centre for COVID19 Situation Administration (CCSA), which serves as a single command center employing a whole-of-government approach to manage the COVID-19 response in a comprehensive manner (Sirilak, 2020, p.7). The board serves to advise on academic issues and give recommendations to prevent and solve economic and social impacts of COVID-19 (The Royal Gazette, No. 137 Section 102, p.8, May 1, 2020).

agencies for the use of space; organized walking streets in all districts to stimulate the economy; revised the plan to revoke designated areas affecting 6,920 vendors; opened 22,046 stalls in markets under the supervision of the Office of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Market; and provided training in product innovation, packaging, and e-commerce (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, 2021). An organization of street vendors, the Bangkok Street Vendors Club, was formed in the same year.

In 2021, Cabinet endorsed the recommendations of the Urgent Law Reform Commission. In the same year another organization of street vendors was formed under the name Federation of Bangkok Street Vendors. The involvement of various agencies from 2018 to 2021 to reinstate street vending is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

Agencies/Organizations that Support the Reinstatement of Street Vending in Bangkok

Years	Agencies	Types	Main reasons
2018	Network of Thai Street Vendors for Sustainable Development	Organization of vendors	Livelihood
	Urgent Law Reform Commission	Government	Livelihood and contributions of street vending
	Academic Network for Inclusive Cities	Network of academics from various disciplines	Livelihood and contributions of street vending
2019	Prime Minister's Delivery Unit	Government	Implementing the prime minister's urgent policies
2020	The Senate	Government	Reduce inequality Promote grassroots economy
	Bangkok Health Assembly under the National Health Commission Office	Government	Livelihood, food security, and contributions of street vending "Inclusive and Healthy City"
	Advisory Board on Economic and Social Impact in the Centre for COVID 19 Situation Administration (CCSA)	Government	Revival of economy and contributions of street vending
	Bangkok Street Vendors Club	Organization of vendors	Livelihood
2021	Federation of Street Vendors in Bangkok	Organization of vendors	Livelihood

A study in 2020 on the effects of COVID-19 revealed that workers in the informal sector were hardest hit by the pandemic (Komin et al., 2020). A study in 2021 examined the situation of slum dwellers, many of whom were street vendors, who faced job and income loss due to the pandemic (Pongutta et al., 2021). Lack of data about workers in the informal sector, including street vendors, hampers the effectiveness of relief measures.

Research Findings

From 2020 to 2021 the author and team embarked on a mixed-method study of informal economic activity in the urban economy, taking street food vending in Bangkok as a case study. Subjects were street food vendors and buyers in three districts of Bangkok—Phra Nakhon, Bang Rak, and Bang Kapi—and vendor supplies providers (Nirathron et al., 2021). The research covered 50 vendors from each district considered, for 150 vendors in total; 300 consumers, with 100 from each district; and 150 vendor supplies providers. Food vendors and consumers were chosen by accidental sampling, while vendor supplies providers were selected proportionally according to the number of mentions made by vendors in the three study districts and the number of samples. The survey of street vending was completed before the lockdown in March 2020.

Findings regarding the characteristics of the street vendors resonate with the findings from many previous studies including one by the author in 2017. Nevertheless, one noteworthy point is that the percentage of vendors who had nine or fewer years of education was lower than in previous studies, whereas the percentage of vendors who had higher education was higher. Vendors were truly self-employed. Most of the vendors in the study (73.3%) came from provinces outside Bangkok, notably from the northeastern region; 50.9% of those who came from the provinces sent money back to their relatives in the provinces; 26.7% previously worked as employees; 50.1% of vendors worked in this sector 20 years or more; 76% sold on the pavements; and 64.4% said they pay fines every month. Regarding physical facilities and public utilities, 39.8% of vendors had verbal agreements with building owners about selling time; 16.1% had agreements about the use of space; 30.5% used electricity connected from a neighboring shophouse or house; and 60.2% reportedly used water, and of this number, 50.7% used water from a nearby shop or building. As for garbage disposal, most vendors relied on the BMA service although 60.2% said that they did not pay garbage fees. For waste water, most vendors disposed of waste water into public sewers. Though most vendors were not charged for waste water disposal, a vendor in Phra Nakorn district said he had to pay 1,000 baht weekly for clearance of public sewers. Most vendors used toilet facilities at nearby offices, department stores, temples, hospitals, gas stations, or even piers. Some used toilets in government offices.

Concerning monitoring, 87.3% of vendors said they have been monitored by government officials. Government officials came from Police Department, the Department of Internal Trade, the Department of Revenue, and the BMA such as City Police, the Department of

Health, and the Department of Environment. In all districts, the most frequent monitoring was done by the City Law Office as officials from other agencies came only once in a while. The frequency of monitoring by City Police varied, either weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, or at two- to three-month intervals. Vendors in Phra Nakorn District mentioned all frequencies. Vendors in Bang Rak Distict said the city police come every other day or almost every day. There were various rates of fines, but the most frequently mentioned were 2,000, 1,000, and 500 baht. Some vendors paid daily fines. In some areas, methods of payment varied even on the same road or soi (lane). Some vendors who sold on the street had to pay fines to City Police too. There were vendors (13.6%) who revealed that they had to pay extra money to "influential people" in addition to paying state officials. Most (75.4%) vendors sold in formerly designated vending areas. In all districts, 40% of vendors had worked at their present location for less than 10 years, while 28.7% had been at the same locations for 10 to 19 years, and 32.3% had occupied their location for 20 years or more. Phra Nakorn district had the lowest of number of vendors who had used their location for fewer than 10 years (28%) whereas in the other two districts this proportion was 46%.

In terms of earnings, 95.3% of vendors said earnings from street vending were their only income. Though 50% of vendors said that their family had other sources of income, earnings from street vending constituted more than half of family income. The average size of household was 3.8 persons. A majority of vendors had days off, but 42% said they worked every day. In all districts, more than 90 percent of vendors had regular customers. Vendors in Bang Rak had the highest gross earnings in the study at 5,177 baht per day, with the lowest expenses of 2,586 baht per day. In contrast, vendors in Phra Nakorn had the lowest gross earnings but highest expenses (4,283 and 2,939 baht per day, respectively).

For most vendors, fresh markets were their major source of supplies. In the course of the research, the author made a trip to Klong Toey Market at four in the morning. During the trip, the author witnessed a noodle vendor from Din Daeng area finish her shopping in half an hour, during which time she visited 13 supplies providers in the market. It was a big shopping day as most materials ran out. The shopping ended at a meatball factory in Pathumwan District. The value of stock at the market was around 4,000 baht. The vendor spent another 2,000 baht at the meatball factory. This stock would last for one to two days, after which the vendor would go purchase supplies again to make sure there were sufficient ingredients for daily use.

A qualitative study was conducted after the beginning of the pandemic. Study found vendors in all three districts who, after losing their income because of eviction, had to adapt to survive. Different adaptive strategies were applied according to the circumstances. A vendor in Phra Nakorn who earned subsistence income was hardest hit due to limited resources and advanced age (67 years). One common adaptive strategy was to change the type of food sold according to the preferences of customers and to reduce costs. Thus vendors switched between different products over the course of the week. Some vendors had to borrow

from informal creditors. The vendors with better economic status were able to acquire materials from wholesale outlets. Subsistence level vendors had to acquire materials multiple times each day, buying a small amount in the morning due to limited cash, and purchasing more materials in the afternoon after receiving cash from morning sales. Switching location for better sales was another strategy for vendors who had subsistence level earnings. The better-off vendors were able to access government relief packages for COVID-19: the cash handouts, the Half-Half co-payment scheme, and the special loans offered by the Government Savings Bank. They have the choice to use food delivery platforms to increase their sales.

Regarding the buyers, it was found that they were mostly of working age, with 65.3% in the 21-40 years age group; 44.6% held bachelor's degrees; 86.4% had employee status; 79.2% were covered by Social Security Section 33 whereas only 5.3% were covered under Section 39; 21.9% earned personal income of not more than 15,000 baht per month while 52.2% earned 15,001-30,000 baht; 48% had household income of not more than 40,000 baht whereas 35% had household income of more than 50,000 baht; 42.3% lived in rented housing. Major reasons offered for buying street foods were convenience, price, taste, and diversity. Obviously food safety is mentioned as reason for buying and not buying street foods.

Regarding food purchases, 89.3% of buyers bought breakfast and of these, 52% bought near their office; 84.7% bought lunch, with 75.3% of them buying near their office; 83% bought dinner, of whom 35.5% bought near their office and 51.3% bought in their home neighborhood. Among food buyers, 87.3% opined that street vending was necessary for their livelihoods; 21.4% said that their food expenses increased and that there was no food diversity after the eviction of street vendors.

The importance of street foods was reflected in number of meals purchased per week, assuming consumption of three meals daily (Table 3). Compared to 2017, street food consumption increased in all income levels (Carrillo & Reed, 2018) (Table 4).

Table 3

Number of Meals Per Week that Consumers Relied on Street Food by Income Level

Monthly income	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Total
Below 10,000 baht	4.14	4.91	2.26	9.15
10,001-15,000 baht	5.10	5.19	4.91	12.51
15,001-20,000 baht	5.05	4.64	4.42	12.23
20,001-25,000 baht	5.67	5.06	4.93	12.66
25,001-30,000 baht	5.06	4.80	5.07	13.29
30,001-35,000 baht	3.78	4.82	4.45	11.33
35,001-40,000 baht	4.62	4.67	4.67	11.63

Monthly income	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Total
40,001-45,000 baht	4.82	5.11	5.00	12.18
45,001-50,000 baht	4.33	4.75	3.71	10.14
50,001 baht up	4.67	4.92	4.50	11.83
Total	**5.03**	**4.87**	**4.76**	**12.22**

Table 4

Street Food Consumption By Income Group 2017 and 2021

Income	August-October 2017	February-March 2021	% Increase
Below 10,000 baht	8.44	10.48	24.2
10,001-15,000 baht	9.24	12.51	35.4
15,001-20,000 baht	9.41	12.23	30.0
20,001-25,000 baht	10.55	13.01	23.3
30,000 baht up	9.78	11.6	18.6
Average	9.57	12.2	27.7

Discussion

The findings invite several interrelated points of discussion.

Contributions of Street Vending

At this point the role of street vending in employment, income generation, and inequality reduction is unquestionable. The persistence of street vending has already been mentioned and findings from the research affirm the contributions of street vending in many aspects, particularly in times of economic downturn. This is reflected in many agencies' positions to support the reinstatement of street vendors. Street vending also plays vital cultural and social roles. Street food vending can be regarded as an ambassador of local culture as cultural capital is brought into a variety of foods. Local food and its culture are part of national identity.

Strategic Perspectives in the Management of Street Vending

Despite the contributions and potential of street vending, a long-term strategic perspective on street vending does not exist. Accommodating policy, if any, has been situational or depended largely on individual governors. Contrary to the comprehensive perspective of street vending as shown earlier in Table 1, the BMA's approach pays attention only to area-based management, thus leaves out many important aspects. The approach does not correspond with the policy in the National Economic and Social Development Plan, which has promoted self-employment as a means to reduce poverty and inequality since the 4th Plan (1977-1981). The policy was extended to the promotion of self-reliance in the 6th Plan (1987-1991). The policy was also part of the strategy to promote social justice and reduce

inequality in the 12th Plan (2017-2021). In addition, the National Strategy (2018-2037) takes into consideration the changing context due to technology disruption, ageing society and the qualifications of the majority of the middle-aged labor force who have low education attainment, limited skills, and limited opportunity in employment.

What has been missing all along in the management of street vending are: 1) the understanding of street vending as both a challenge and a solution to important issues such as lack of employment opportunities and a means to tackle inequality; 2) inclusiveness that takes into consideration the diverse needs of people and unequal opportunities; and 3) the effects on the macroeconomic situation, in that the dislocation of street vending adds to the inequality in the society (Nirathron & Jitsuchon, 2018).

Limitations of Existing Laws

The issues concern law and law enforcement. The situation of street vending in Bangkok reflects the limitations of law. Focusing on physical space rather than a comprehensive view of street vending limits the perspective of city administrators. Furthermore, the laws put the occupation at stake, leaving the fate of street vendors and the dynamic of the occupation in the hands of traffic and city police. It is almost impossible to have a wider perspective when the governing law has such limited perspectives. As for enforcement, the growing number of street vendors cannot be attributed only to the ineffectiveness of law enforcement, but also structural issues that create demand for self-employment. Whereas national policies recognize the role of micro-enterprise in poverty reduction and entrepreneurial development, the BMA sees street vending in terms of problems at individual level rather than as a structural and systemic problem.

The lengthy time vendors trade from their particular locations is another cause for concern. Given the "temporary status" as indicated in the Land Traffic Act, B.E. 2522 [1979] and the findings from the research, the allowable duration of "temporary status" can be unlimited. This implies limited opportunities for newcomers who want to enter the vending business.

The Different Economic Status of Street Vendors

As stated in the theories and the findings from the research, some vendors earned subsistence income. More often than not, these vendors are the elderly, or persons who have to take care of family members, or both. These vendors should be assisted to maintain their occupation, so they can rely on their earnings, apart from the cash transfer for the elderly. Furthermore, better-off vendors should also be supported so that they can maintain or expand their ventures. They should also be subject to taxation.

Street Foods and Food Safety

As consuming street food is a food strategy for many and provides food security, food hygiene is very important. It is imperative that street food vendors have sufficient knowledge about food safety. They should also be equipped with utilities to assure hygienic food preparation in the vending sites. A study of street foods in six areas of Bangkok in 2019 by the Nutrition Association of Thailand found that 42% of

street food samples had excessive levels of microbial contamination. Foods also had excessive levels of fat and sodium. Out of 218 food vendors sampled, 34.9% never received training on street food service (Chongsuwat & Phosat, 2019).

Organization of Street Vendors and Self-Regulation

Currently there are three organizations of vendors whose members are not limited to vendors in some particular locality.[20] These organizations face challenges regarding livelihood constraints, the independent operating nature of street vending, solidarity among organizations and their members, and unsuccessful attempts to reclaim their occupations. Street vendors in Bangkok already organize to varying degrees. There are already organizations of street vendors in many localities in Bangkok as already mentioned. Vendors at local level should be encouraged to organize. They have the advantage of proximity and close relationship due to frequent interaction. This would be an accommodating factor for self-regulation as enforcement by authorities is costly and ineffective. Co-monitoring, which has already been initiated in the directive, should serve as a platform to exercise self-regulation. An organization for self-regulation could help street vendors formalize and take part in the policy process (Hummel, 2017). The passage of the National Act on Promotion and Development of Informal Workers, the draft of which was approved by the Cabinet in December 2021, would be another milestone to support the organization of street vendors. The law would grant informal workers the right to organize by occupation on the basis of promotion, protection, and empowerment for the negotiation of justice in employment and skills development (Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, 2019). This resonates with smart regulation that pursues flexible, imaginative, and innovative forms of control (Song, 2020).

Street Vending as an Instrument to Revive the Economy

There have been calls for the use of street vendors to revive the economy (Sax, 2020; Song, 2020; Li et al., 2021; Biron, 2021; Toker, 2021). The contributions of street vending have already been outlined in previous sections. What should be emphasized here are the challenges that should be addressed.

1. Adoption of friendly attitudes among the public and BMA administrators. A poll in February 2022 showed that there were positive attitudes towards street vending in Bangkok.[21] Positive attitudes come from effective monitoring that the

[20] They are Thai Street Vendors Network for Sustainable Development, the Federation of Bangkok Street Vendors, and Bangkok Street Vendors Club.

[21] In February 2022, a poll was conducted by the poll unit of the National Institute of Development Administration. Respondents were 1,319 Bangkok residents at least 18 years of age, with diverse educational levels, occupations, and income. The statistical significance level is 97.0. It was found that 92.1% of subjects sampled buy from street vendors and that 59.1% said the BMA should allow for vending given the condition of enough space on the pavements, with 66.6% believing that the problems concerning street vending in Bangkok could certainly be solved.

rights of the public, in particular people who use public spaces, have been respected. Thus, regulation is essential. The BMA administrators should realign their attitudes to see street vending as an opportunity rather a problem to be eradicated.

2. Registration. Registration of existing street vendors is necessary so that the BMA has a realistic picture of the number of street vendors. Types of goods sold should be categorized, at least as "food" and "non-food." Vendors at subsistence level of earnings should be classified separately as this group of vendors may require assistance.

3. Exploration of feasible spaces. The contributions of street vending, in particular in economic terms, should serve as a catalyst for the exploration of space as stipulated in the directive, considering space in secondary streets where vending is normally allowed. Exploration of space should not be done in a piecemeal manner, but rather in a systematic city-wide manner that includes all feasible spaces, including spaces owned by state agencies.

4. Enforce the directive cautiously, taking into consideration issues that have been mentioned to assure that the directive promotes rather than hampers chances for the street vendors to revive the economy. Monitoring should also be in place to assure that the interests of pedestrians and other stakeholders have been observed.

5. Promote opportunities for co-regulation between vendors and the district office. Smart regulation should be applied. The roles and responsibilities of vendors' representatives should be outlined so that vendors can share the regulatory burden, in particular in the aspects of public safety and food safety. The issues concerning public utilities should also be addressed.

6. Capacity building. It is imperative that street vendors are equipped with knowledge pertinent to their occupation and public safety.

7. Financial returns from the use of public space. The state should receive financial returns for the use of public space for business purposes in the form of fees and taxes.

8. Linking street food to health and environment issues. Street vending can be part of health promotion due to its affordability and accessibility. Singapore provides a good example, with its "Healthy Hawker Food" policy, which is intended to condition people towards a healthier lifestyle to reduce non-communicable disease such as diabetes and heart disease.

Concluding Remarks

The position of this paper is to support street vending as a grassroots economic sector to revive the economy after the strike of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to advocate for Bangkok to embrace inclusive economy. The conceptual framework is presented to facilitate understanding of street vending from theoretical and policy perspectives. Evolution of the street vending situation in Bangkok and the management of street vending from 1973 to the present reflect fluctuations of policy and frequent dislocation. Various attempts and recommendations by many parties to reinstate street vending both as a means for the post-COVID-19 revival of the economy and the longer term confirm the contributions

of street vending and its future potential. Street vending's significance as an instrument for economic revival after the COVID-19 pandemic and the attainment of an inclusive city depends much on how the challenges will be addressed.

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Smart City and Governance Mechanisms in a Digital Transformation State

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the shifting concepts of smart city development. In particular the study focuses on the policy and context development of smart city as a policy to enable smart governance in Thailand. The characteristics of smart city development in Thailand are compared to two international case studies: 1) Smart City Wien, Austria and 2) Smart City Mission, India. The study shows that smart city development in Thailand has been dominated mainly by central government, which imposes a rigid framework and procedures. This results in misperceptions and a fixed mindset on the part of local authorities regarding smart city development. The study highlights some gradually improving understanding of the smart city concept and successful development in some Thai municipalities such as Roi-Et, Udon Thani, and Yala. This study recommends that an essential key to smart city is to apply technologies to strengthen the city's capacities in multiple dimensions such as public services, area management, and governance. The paper identifies the critical factor for a successful smart city development, which is to establish a common understanding of smart city development among stakeholders (central government agencies, the city, and the private sector) on the alignment of all parties' actions. This is to allow smart city and related technologies to fully enhance the operations and services in the city with a common purpose and direction.

Keywords: Smart city, digital transformation, governance, city development

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Introduction

Digital conversion or the so-called digital transformation has been recognized as a crucial shifting in socio and economic aspects. Area-based development has been influenced by digital conversion. Digital transformation is regarded not only as a socio-economic development tool but also as an engine that is capable of stimulating and propelling area-based development. Thus, digital transformation brings about city development. Area management theories portray cities as the main "expediter" of economic-centered area development in the city center and surrounding areas. Such theories have paved the way for smart city development theory to have an influential role in area management in Thailand since 2012. Currently, public sector agencies such as the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society and the Digital Economy Promotion Agency have shown interest in promoting smart city development. Nevertheless, the understanding of smart city development has been interpreted differently depending on different organizational mandates and operations. In addition, the various types of smart city development interpretations have remarkably shifted from the original theory; smart city development did not regard cities as places to install technology. In fact, the theory regards cities as genuine expediters of smart city development.

This paper, therefore, aims at raising questions regarding the shifting concepts of smart city development theory and examining how the concepts have influenced Thailand's outlook. Also, the paper presents substantive smart city development examples aligning with accurate smart city theory that enables smart governance mechanisms. To this end, case analysis is used to find success factors and compare concepts between original and modified smart city development theories.

In order to construct fundamental understanding of smart city theory, it is essential to recognize that smart city theory concerns area-based development focusing highly on urban areas such as cities, communities, economic-centered areas, and areas that have potential to be developed to become cities. Conceptualization of smart city relies upon various applied scientific principles such as information technology (IT), communication, Internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and other emerging technologies related to society, the economy, and city development. Smart city theory demands supporting a city's intelligences and capabilities. In other words, the goal is to accelerate smart city proficiency and accuracy in order to decrease level of peopleware, namely, promoting non-computing components. IBM proposes that smart city technologies were to adapt various technologies, information communication, and automated systems integrated to maximize management system capabilities. Moreover, the European Union (EU) said smart city technologies will modify the city development outlook as the city will start endorsing AI and modern IT to procure their city.

From concepts above, one of the fundamental principles of smart city development is to apply technologies to city development and management such as application structure, technological displays, or case-by-case supporting measures from the public sector. International patterns of

endorsing smart cities since the 2010s lead us to realize that the city is the most essential component to smart city development as both a place that deploys technologies and as an actor that employs such technologies.

From this point of view, conceptualization of a smart city considers a city as a place to implement advanced technologies, but, crucially, also as a player in technological advancement. The understanding about a city's roles is a point of conflict in discussion among smart city developers, especially in regard to sustainability.

Smart City Background in Thailand and its Conversion

Thailand had been paying a great amount of attention to endorsing smart city development. Initially focusing on provincial level, Thailand paid attention to developing potential economic-centered provinces expecting that infrastructure developments in terms of IT and communications under "smart provinces" could be achieved. The campaign was operated under the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (currently called the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society), which was a core authority in the development and utilization of IT. The authority worked closely with IT-communication sector and software development industries such as the National Science and Technology Development Agency. Thailand's national smart city development plans highlight the city as the center of socio-economic growth. The idea is equivalent to the international idea of developing a smart city in terms of merging urban areas with complicated structures and having greater value than outlying areas. The Ministry of Digital Economy and Society and the Digital Economy Promotion Agency led these efforts.

However, in their implementation, smart city plans in Thailand have been misinterpreted from the original idea, particularly concerning developmental area planning since a key foundation of smart city development is the understanding of city features. Thus, Thailand operated and propelled smart city plans differently from many other countries. Smart city development in Thailand relied on central authority efforts commissioned by fixed procedures. The original mission was to spur technologies to start up groups and research institutes for technology. For example, in the case of Phuket's smart city development, the Phuket municipality attempted to install intelligent systems to elevate public services within the city such as healthcare services, elder care services, environmental quality control, and tourism management. However, Phuket smart city development encountered three main challenging problems.

1) Inconsistency of smart city development. Original technology models were installed in the city but the municipality did not have consistent development measures in order to repair and maintain these technologies. Some of these became a burden to the city.

2) Unsuitable technology installations for city context and structural operations. Because core developments were designed for central sectors and technology developers, this resulted in misshaped functions of these technologies. Moreover, detailed design systems did not match the

city's missions. These factors led to a lack of consistency since they did not match the city context in the first place.

3) Lack of technological connections. Most of the technologies installed in the city were designed for different purposes, including designing foundations, operating connections, information flow, and communication systems among technologies. These elements resulted in the fragmentation of technologies.

These challenges indicate that Phuket's smart city was substantially achieved only in terms of technological relocation. Sustainable technological development and long-term capacity building among city administration were not successfully implemented. Technological relocation in Phuket's smart city did not maximize capacity nor did it strengthen area-based management.

Apart from Phuket's smart city, the studies showed that central agencies responsible for economic development and digital development made efforts to develop smart cities in other provinces as well. The operations were implemented through funding mechanisms and support measures from central agencies to local administrations in terms of innovation development and modern product-service building.

However, those smart city campaigns encountered similar challenges to those faced by Phuket's smart city. For example, many faced inconsistency issues, lacked connectivity between new technology and city structural commissions, and involved installation of inapplicable technologies. All in all, the challenging problems in Thailand came from the unfamiliarity of the smart city context which hinders smart city development, city management improvement, and governance mechanism development.

International Smart City Development

Due to Thailand's misunderstanding of the smart city concept, addressed in the previous section, in order to have a proper understanding and overview of smart city development, we will turn to two successful international cases:

1) Case study of Smart City Wien, Austria;

2) Case study of Smart Cities Mission, India.

Smart City Wien, Austria

Vienna, or Wien, has undertaken city transformation initiative called Smart City Wien. The city was awarded the smartest city by UNESCO in 2020. The outstanding innovative development of Smart City Wien is consistent development in all dimensions. To clarify, they inquire about the city's fundamental needs and the goal is to create a cozy and comfortable city. Moreover, Smart City Wien is designed to continuously adapt through the changing context in Vienna, for example, for aging society and to improve defenses after the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. However, the applicable functional design subjected to changing context of Smart City Wien does not change the smart city direction because the main development structure, which includes such things as the connectivity network, transportation infrastructure, and land-use management, does not get affected by minor changes.

The Smart City Wien concept is definite and straightforward. It is also effectively supported by Smart City Wien wire-frame integrating coherent relations in every aspect. Furthermore, there is a clear development plan indicating organizational responsibilities as well as a systematic protocol backed up by the City of Vienna as the core public sector entity that has coordinating authority, linking to private sector entities such as international and multinational companies. Moreover, the Smart City Wien campaign has been designed to be connected to other smart city developments in Europe, namely Barcelona 3.0 and Smart Amsterdam.

Smart Cities Mission, India

India's central government has attempted to expand the notion of smart cities in India by creating the Smart Cities Mission campaign. The campaign was initiated by the Ministry of Urban Development, which was authorized to develop central smart city guidelines by establishing a development strategy, a project development plan, an investment plan or financial forecast proposal, and by facilitating investment and technology measures such as a specialist pool, a business consultant pool, a financial consultant pool, and a partner network across the globe. The campaign is driven by interstate competitions under various development frameworks, namely, economic-centered city, green industrial city, innovative city, tourist city, and livelihood and logistic-centered city. The role of the central government is to boost competition among cities, provide coaches with expertise in smart city development, and grant financial support to selected cities. After a city receives a grant, there is a progress tracking mechanism that will follow up the progress in the long run. Eligible cities will be set in a commission as successful smart city case studies for further review.

India is a great blueprint for advancing smart city projects because the interrelated roles among the central government, cities, and the private sector are explicit and well-organized. Under the Smart Cities Mission, these well-balanced relationships are as follow.

1) The central government has the crucial roles of establishing standards, implementing measures, operating measures, as well as financial support measures in order to develop, boost, and integrate the campaign.

2) Cities are responsible for devising city initiative policies, defining problems, devising strategies, implementing measures, and undertaking long-term operations.

3) The private sector, especially IT consultants, financial consultants, and related suppliers in the industrial sector, have essential roles in creating, understanding, and setting the direction of smart city development.

Case Studies Compared to Thailand

Comparing these two case studies to Thailand, we can see three main differences.

1) Multidimensional integration under common standard and practice.

The two case studies share the similar characteristic of having multilayer development that not only serves diverse areas, but also shares common investment

practices since the central governments provide documentation standards, specialist pools, and accessible-transparent support measures.

2) Majorly strict but minorly flexible development structure.

Vienna and India comprise direct development frameworks. They are flexible enough to shifting time and space conversions in minor level. For example, India has developed flexible frameworks that can be applied to various cities. Austria has invented Smart City Wien development frameworks that are able to handle current world challenges such as an aging society and COVID-19.

3) Highlighting the pivotal role of cities.

As seen from the two case studies, one of the common characteristics is a recognition of a changing role for the city. The city should not be considered only as a developmental space, but it should be recognized as a developer that has smart city development plans as tools to maximize capacities.

By measuring these key factors for a successful smart city against the management system in Thailand, it can be inferred that smart city development in Thailand is at a beginning stage and does not have a clear direction. Moreover, operational dimensions in Thailand are structured differently. The central governments of Austria and India have performed not only as a point linking technical proficiency from the private sector with city development agendas, but also a regulator and operator. Regarding private sector entities, they have performed as both direct investors and as "babysitters" with experience and expertise in shaping smart city development plans.

Example of Smart City Development in Thailand to Smart Governance Mechanism

According to lessons learned from the two case studies, reflections collected from Austria and India's governments regarding its authority, responsibility, and autonomy show that their structures are precise; its boundaries cover city management and investment plans under proper decentralization dictating organizational responsibilities and managing fitting city procedures. Even so, research shows that the central government of India has attempted to enhance competency of city networks, for example, in technology, developing funds and financial independence.

Fortunately, Thailand has initiated and adopted decentralization plans under the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization to Local Government Organization Act, B.E. 2542 [1999]. City management has been placed under the authority of the regional sector. Moreover, division of authority has been balanced between the central sector and regional sectors; in other words, regional sectors tend to have more authority over their own cities while the central sector now focuses more on the so-called "pivotal role of the city".

Research in 2019 by King Prajadhipok's Institute indicates that regional sectors have awareness of their own city contexts, as well as their role as a main vehicle for driving, for example, citizen's life elevation and healthcare management. Moreover, regional

sectors, particularly at city municipality level and town municipality level, have primarily prepared for this transformation. Additionally, they the most top two entities that eager. In fact, the overall score of city municipality readiness is at 60% and town municipality readiness is at 50%. Subdistrict municipality readiness is at 42%. In term of the readiness, city municipalities had prepared most on smart living aspect (73%), smart safety aspect (70%), and smart healthcare aspect (69%). Town municipalities had prepared most on smart healthcare aspect (59%), smart living aspects (57%), and smart government aspects (56%).

Previous studies indicate that regional sectors in Thailand are ready to potentially perform on their own as significant leaders that will intensify the level of smart city development as they realize their pivotal role. However, there is a shortage in terms of budget and bureaucratic system flexibility, i.e., procurement and purchasing system and technical proficiency. Municipalities, especially city and town municipalities, are considered to be adequate for developing smart cities due to their optimal boundaries, missions, and resources. All in all, it can be summarized that it is important to endorse smart cities in Thailand at city and town municipality levels, as shown in the following examples.

1) Roi-Et smart city development (Smart 101)

Roi-Et Municipality is a small-to-middle-sized municipality that requires compact but effective smart solutions and smart services in order to serve Roi-Et citizens, fragile groups, local products, and tourism. Roi-Et Municipality launched "Smart 101" adopting compact smart city principles focused highly on low-budget innovative development. An outstanding characteristic of Smart 101 is that the municipality realizes its own capabilities and size well enough to choose the appropriate development, which is low-cost technologies. Moreover, there is strong intercity cooperation in Roi-Et, including town and city.

2) Udon Thani smart city development

Udon Thani is a large municipality that not only comprises of livelihoods and major commercial-economic zones in Northeastern Thailand, but is also a central logistics hub for Nong Khai Province on the Laos border. The municipality considers itself as a central commercial city in Thailand's northeast. The municipality has constructed a double track railway, high speed trains, dry ports and an industrial zone. Therefore, smart city development has stepped in so as to increase the municipality's competitiveness as a central commercial city in the Northeast. For example, they have adopted principles such as commercial registration certificates, a tax collection system, economic and public property management, tourism promotion by using Udon Thani as a central event city, and central logistic city. In short, an outstanding characteristic of this municipality is the explicit understanding of regional location; they realize an interconnection between their regional location and mission that makes it significant to be able to facilitate mega investment, therefore, high-budget technologies can be used as they are suitable for the city scale.

3) Yala smart city development

Yala Municipality is another case study in Thailand that embraces the smart city principle to address major challenges in the city, namely, security issues due to political unrest and economic restoration. Therefore, the municipality emphasizes investing in two main smart city features. One is smart city technologies for reinforcing security. The city has fortified its citizens and public spaces with a "smart surveillance system" by building a network of CCTVs and a central security management system. Second, Yala installed optical fiber and a 5G network across the city to enhance the city's capacities in terms of innovation, education, and cultural tourism in Southeast Asia. A key element to the success of Yala smart city is the acknowledgement of their safety and security issues and their long-term ambition to improve the socio-economic situation. More importantly, they accept the fact that the smart city is driven by data and information flow. Hence, data networks that have extensive coverage and are sufficient are even more significant than the installation of devices.

All of these examples are part of active provincial sectors that realize the pivotal role of cities. To summarize, problems and challenges of smart city implementation in Thailand might not be the result of misunderstanding or inadequate understanding of the city's pivotal role, but instead might be the result of ideologies and methodologies embraced by central state agencies. Choosing the right ideologies and methodologies will support the interconnected roles of each sector to reach the goal of maximizing smart city development.

Smart City Elevation Plan in Thailand and the Role of Central Government

It can be concluded that an essential element of smart city development is to apply technologies in order to strengthen cities' capacities in terms of land-use management. Additionally, technologies can also be applied to intensify governance mechanism as well since it is capable of repairing particular areas as well as accumulating city ability by its potential and location. Nevertheless, the most significant factor to successfully develop a smart city is to concentrate on building a common understanding of smart city development among central agencies, the city (or municipality), and the private sector. It is crucial to share an understanding that the city is not just an area where they will install technologies, but those technologies will not be effectively equipped unless the related sectors amplify them.

In conclusion, this paper proposes the following new smart city principles.

1) Relevant organizations should analyze common management structures and extract the knowledge into a common framework. In addition, the analysis should include the dimensions that smart city development will elevate and how they operate.

2) The city or municipality should play a significant role in expanding technological possibilities since the city has direct experience and relationships that central state agencies do not have.

3) In order to facilitate smart city development, a city should construct common practices, shared platforms and

cooperative investment proposals for the private sector so as to match the idea of developing a city with technical proficiency and finance from the private sector.

4) Involved sectors should realize their particular duties and missions, especially central state agencies, who should endorse themselves as the main player driving smart city technological advancement, and as the core authority that invests, supports and supervises smart city development.

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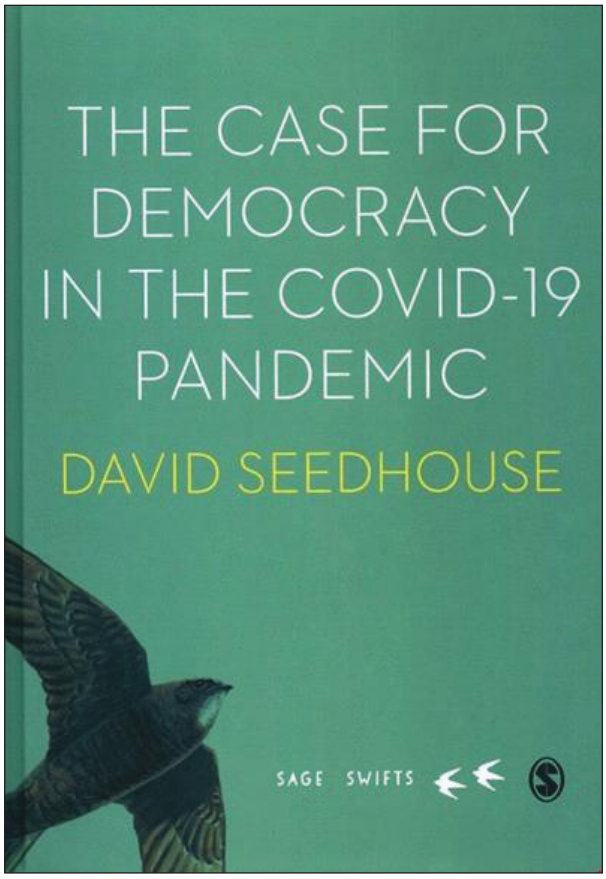
Book Review

Book Review: The Case for Democracy in the COVID-19 Pandemic

by David Seedhouse

*Purawich Watanasukh**



The world is now three years into the COVID-19 pandemic that began in late 2019. From the very beginning of the outbreak, numerous governments around the world adopted the idea that the virus must be defeated at any cost. Thus, we have seen governments impose drastic measures such as lockdowns, during which people were told to stay in their homes and take instructions from authorities. Such actions have been justified as being part of a "new normal." However, there is another, different, side to the story. COVID-19 is not just a pandemic, but also a phenomenon that has prompted the need to rethink democracy, civil liberties, and political participation.

The Case for Democracy in the COVID-19 Pandemic is written by David Seedhouse, Professor of Deliberative Practice at Aston University. This book originates from the author's observation of what he considered a chaotic governmental response early during the COVID-19 outbreak, imposing radical lockdowns, ordering

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people to stay home, releasing limited information, and not engaging public consultation on any measures imposed. This book is intended to question what the author calls the "contemporary madness" regarding COVID-19.

In the introduction the author begins by posing questions, establishing a storytelling tone that continues throughout the book. Among these key questions are how and why is COVID-19 more important than other problems, and why is decision-making left in the hands of a few specialists like scientists, doctors, civil servants, or politicians? Why are civil liberties ignored? Why does the public accept restrictions? And why are ethics and human rights absent from the discussion?

This book was written while the author was locked down in the United Kingdom between March and May 2020. At that time, governments around the world attempted to defeat the virus "at any cost" by imposing radical lockdowns and telling people to stay home. The author asks, "Do I want to live like this?" and his answer provides the rationale for the book:

> *I don't want to live in a society where I have no meaningful say in what happens to me. I don't want to be locked down and prevented from seeing my daughters in New Zealand indefinitely. I don't want to be governed by a political elite with values I don't share. I don't want to live in a society where the only view of health is that it is the opposite of disease, as a presumed fact. I don't want to live in a society where people's view of risk can be so easily distorted by propaganda that they are scared to death of something that is unlikely to hurt them. I don't want to live in a society where the politician I helped elect to represent my views can vote for exactly the opposite in parliament. Nor do I want to live in a society obsessed with living at any cost.*
>
> *I want to live in a society where people are encouraged and supported to think for themselves. Where journalists see their work as not merely to report, or comment, but to educate and encourage reflection, rather than an instant emotional reaction. I want to live in a society where I can encourage others to grow. I want to live in a society where I can contribute and where there are ways where my views can count and can have an impact. I want to live in a society where quality of life is more important than clinging to the perch whatever the price. And I want to live in a society where there is real democracy, rather than the sham we are continually persuaded is the least-worst option.* (Seedhouse, 2020, pp. 4-5)

The first highlight that the author argues in this book is the "guided by science" approach. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, most governments have claimed that the way they handle the pandemic is guided by science. The author, however, argues that this claim is only partly true because decision-making has been based on values, assumptions, biases, subjective perceptions, and misperceptions, which are native features of all humans. The author demonstrates with the example of closing pubs in the UK. A decision made by the UK government is a human choice. (Seedhouse, 2020, p. 49). The claim "guided by science" is thus a value judgement based on psychological bias, to which we all are

subject, though authorities seem to be unaware and still believe they are doing a rational and fact-based job.

This argument is worthy of debate. Generally, when we talk about scientific approach, it is recognized as a "value-free" approach, meaning that it does not involve a bias. What the author presents here is that scientific approach as invoked by governments around the world when curbing COVID-19 is in no way value-free, but reflects a form of bias and involves values in any decisions made. Whether the reader agrees or not, this prompts reflection regarding the neutrality of the scientific approach, especially when governments claim that science demands some particular measures in order to combat the pandemic.

Also, the author argues that most experts, especially public health experts who serve as government advisers, have limited vision to foresee various scenarios. These experts' views are largely based on statistics, numbers, and modelling, and they want to protect the public from harmful scenarios. They value the "public good" over individual autonomy and they consider themselves to be the "guardians of public health." In the author's view, although the way these experts think and act is understandable, it is also necessary to have a balanced society in which other views are integrated in decision-making processes before implementing policies.

This argument is crucial, especially during the beginning of the outbreak of a pandemic. The world is full of data and statistics and various "worst case" scenarios presented by experts who have an influence on decision-making in the governments around the world. This leads to the key question that, during the pandemic, why is decision-making left in the hands of a few specialists? How can we know that any action these experts recommend governments take is a right one if decision-making does not involve the views of others in the society? This argument makes me think about the Thai case, where senior professors from various prestigious medical schools were appointed to the government's committee on COVID-19 from the beginning of the pandemic, giving them influence in the decisions made to battle the pandemic. Measures initially imposed by the government seemed designed to assure public health safety while disregarding economic loss and social impact of restrictions. I agree with the author that any public policy must involve public consultation before implementation, and COVID-19 is not an excuse to bypass the public's views with recommendations by experts.

Another issue that the author points out is rationality. The author uses the term "rational field," which is explained as "a combination of logic and evidence plus the (often hidden) reasons why one set of logic and evidence is preferred. Once understood, they provide a simple means of working practically to improve the world, using evidence and values in their proper balance" (Seedhouse, 2020, p. 64). The author argues that while it may appear that we are being totally rational, we may only be aware of a part of the picture. Also, the author points out that rational field "blindness" is a psychological bias.

In other words, this argument reminds the reader that although we may think we

are being rational, our knowledge about COVID-19 may be incomplete and our conclusions therefore the product of bias. This argument makes me wonder about the consequences of our presumably rational actions in the face of incomplete information about this infection. I became infected with COVID-19 in March 2022. Before that, I had thought I was well-prepared in case I were to test positive. But when that day came, it took me some time to understand the symptoms of the disease and take medical treatment. Even when I recovered and tested negative, I continued to experience symptoms of "long COVID," for example, persistent frequent coughing for a month. My personal experience reinforces for me the author's core assertion that we do not know everything about COVID-19, so we still need to investigate and learn more about what it really is.

The author also comments on journalism in the time of the pandemic. For the author, investigative journalism is overshadowed by snapshots of events and people's "human interest" stories. He finds that news reporting treats the news as if it were a live blog, and the result is "disorientating and counterproductive." Journalists need to consider quality over quantity. Reporting the news as a live blog has made the audience bored and overloaded with data. The author also notices that apart from the impacts of the virus, the ill-considered decisions by politicians do not appear in the news.

I totally agree with this argument. Over the past three years, watching news on COVID-19 is like watching a "number game": counting the number of new cases and deaths every day. This argument reminds the reader to question whether journalism has performed its function properly during the pandemic or simply strived to show alarming numbers. In my opinion, there are issues surrounding COVID-19 that require addressing through investigative journalism, and it is time for journalism to do its job as it should.

Another crucial issue the author observes is that during the pandemic, fundamental ethical principles have been overridden. In general, since the outbreak of COVID-19, government actions have lacked consent from the public. In the author's view, this is a huge departure from the basic principle of informed consent to government. Informed consent is important. If it is to be ignored, there must be a massive justification. Why is COVID-19 such an exception that the normal ethical standard can be overridden? Possible justifications for exempting this standard might be a condition of emergency, damage on an unprecedented scale, a complicated situation, impossibility of informing people sufficiently, absence of a mechanism to gain people's consent, acceptance of paternalism, or Utilitarian considerations; these can and should override rights in situations where the public health is concerned. To the author, COVID-19 is not exceptional, and it should not be justified as a way to override basic ethical principles.

Among the key arguments that the author aims to present in his book, to me, this one is the most important. The author reminds us that COVID-19 is not sufficient reason to override ethical principles. However, we are being made to believe that such action is acceptable because the pandemic is an emergency that warrants the

overriding of ethical principles. To me, if COVID-19 is taken as an exception to override basic ethical principles, more exceptions will follow in the future because anything can be regarded as an emergency. The author made me question what will happen and what kind of society we live in if ethical principles are not respected. This is important for us to think about.

This book is an argument for extensive participatory and deliberative democracy as a means to widen the "narrow lens" of decision-making. The author's argument is simple: if a decision-making process on a vital issue is left in the hands of a small group of "experts," the resulting vision will be too narrow. To ensure the best interests of the public, decision-making should involve public consultation instead of experts meeting in secret and advising governments to act without accountability. Also, the world has become complex and diverse and there is a need for collective effort to solve problems. The author calls for a "standing people's forum for deliberative democracy," which would involve people from many different backgrounds and have power to advise governments. The forum should be "properly administered, online, inclusive, and publicly funded."

What I really like about this book is that the author presents a clear argument with a lot of supporting evidence, for example, official statistics, official reports, research, and case studies. Whether or not the reader agrees with the author's argument, this book is worth reading to learn and consider what has happened to our world since the outbreak of COVID-19, particularly in regard to democracy. Also, the author does not just criticize but presents a practical solution.

On the other hand, this book could be somewhat difficult to read for those who are not accustomed to looking at public health data and statistics. Furthermore, although the author builds a clear argument from the beginning through to proposed solutions at the end and presents a variety of supporting evidence to convince the reader, I found that the stories presented in each chapter are not sufficiently connected into "one story." In each chapter, the author focuses on explaining case studies and data rather than drawing patterns from the data. In other words, it is like each chapter is its own story, not a piece of a puzzle that contributes to a "big picture." In individual chapters, emphasis on the broader argument of that chapter after the author demonstrates case studies is absent. Also, there are no end-of-chapter summaries before the beginning of the new chapter. To me, it is like the author is just telling us "what it is" but not "why it matters," which leaves a gap in the book's content.

In summary, **The Case for Democracy in the COVID-19 Pandemic** is a well-researched and thought-provoking book supported by evidence and examples from various case studies. It provides a critical view to this phenomenon and makes the reader review and rethink what we have experienced since the outbreak of COVID-19.

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