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## The Development of Rural Constitution for Sustainable Self-Governance of the Banyang Community, Wat Bot District, Phitsanulok

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### Abstract

The rural constitution is the community rule which issued from the general will and agreement among local people. It aims to seek a cooperation and participation in solving the problems of community. This research focuses on the development of rural constitution of Banyang community in Wat Bot district, Phitsanulok province, Thailand. The research method applied the participatory action research with the process of rural constitution. It found that the formation of rural constitution of Banyang Community occurred from the initiation of the local and community leaders. It started from the village rules and developed to the rural constitution at the sub-district level. Meanwhile, the implementation of rural constitution has been supported by the rural constitutional council of Banyang sub-district which is comprised of the local and community leaders, the representatives from the villages, social groups and local organizations. Therefore, the important factors that drives the sustainable development of rural constitution and self-governance of the Banyang community are: the strong of local and community leaders, and the social awareness in communities' problems of local people.

**Keywords:** rural constitution; sustainable development; self-governed community

### Introduction

The rural constitution is the constitution that the rural people designed and agreed as the common rule together (The Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), 2016). Meanwhile, The National Health Commission Office defined the meaning of the rural constitution as the rule, target, dream, common rule and agreement which the local people want to see, to be and to have it. The target aims to make a better quality of life and the happiness of people and the community. The community rule is regarded as the tool of creation for public policy. The rural constitution is the community rule which derived



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from the general will and agreement among people. Therefore, the rural constitution would happen from the gathering of local people, while every organization, network and local administration would support the community development (Lekwiwat, 2018).

Sirapanichkul, R. (2013) mentioned that the community could set up the organization of the rural constitution in their communities for administration and follow-up on the process and the rules of the constitution. Also, an organization could support the implementation of the local constitution with cooperation among local organizations and government offices. In the meantime, the local administration could apply the local constitution in the part of the ordinance or municipal law, and support the fund for public policies or community projects under the implementation of the local constitution. In this regard, the local constitution contributes to social empowerment among the state, the local government, communities, and people (Sirapanichkul, 2013).

Subsequently, the rural constitution is the community rule which comes from the demands and aspires of local people as the general will. This community rule is different in each community based on the demands, contexts, and agreements of people in communities. Nevertheless, the major principle of rural constitutional development is participation which has to open for everyone and sectors to think, act, follow and gain benefits together as the partner of rural constitution development.

In this regard, the Banyang community which is located in Wat Bot district, Phitsanulok province, Thailand. It is a medium agricultural community which is comprised of 11 villages. The community is far from the Wat Bot district around 14 kilometers and 42 kilometers from the city of Phitsanulok. The priority demand and issue of community is a campaigning on prevention of the road safety because the Wat Bot district have the main road connecting between Phitsanulok province and Uttaradit province. It has led to many road accidents around 464 times per year from 2014 to 2019. In 2018, the road accidents happened 46 times and have 56 injured and 3 dead. The major causes of road accident are no wearing a helmet (83.92%), drinking alcohol (28.57%), and have the accident risks around 34 points in the areas such as insufficient lighting, no warning sign, inappropriate safety roads, and lacking of checking points. Therefore, the community leaders and local government administration aims to reduce the road accidents and manage the accident risk points in Banyang community through the implementation of road safety management functions of Wat Bot district.

Meanwhile, Banyang community became the major priority areas for the road safety project of Wat Bot district in 2019. Accordingly, the community promoted the role model for



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sustainable prevention of the road safety through campaigning a road safety culture and implementing the village regulation for road safety to reduce the road accidents and enhance the better quality of life of people in Banyang sub-district. Also, the community could become the learning center for Wat Bot district (The Road Safety Center of Wat Bot district, 2019).

Subsequently, the Banyang community attempts to apply the rural constitution for implementation of the road safety issues and enforcement to the village regulations. However, the problem is a lacking of the participatory process and function of rural people which could contribute to the mutual agreement and local innovation for promoting the quality of life and developing the human capacity of people in community. Besides, the community is also looking for the local function that could lead to a behavior adjustment and safety environment of community such as the cooperation function among local organizations and the rural constitutional council. Therefore, the research applied the process of rural constitutional development as the communities' tool in creating the participatory process among rural people and social groups for set up the community agreement and the participatory public policy as well as the local innovation for solving problems particularly the road safety and quality of life of rural people. It also aims to enhance the community democracy and sustainable self-governed management of Banyang community.

### Research Objectives

1. To develop the process of rural constitution for enhancing the participation of people in dealing with the community issues.
2. To create the knowledge of participatory democracy based on the rural constitution.

### Scope of Research

This research focuses on the development of rural constitution from the formation to the implementation of rural constitution within 1 years. The key agents of this study are 50 persons which selected by the purposive sampling from the local and community leaders, the representative from 11 villages, the representatives from the local saving group, and the representatives from the local Banyang Health Promotion Hospital, Wat Bot Agricultural Extension Office and Wat Bot Police Station.



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## Research Methods

This research applied the participatory action research in the rural constitutional development of Banyang sub-district, Wat Bot, Phitsanulok province. The research process and collecting information are as in below:

1. The researcher introduce the participatory action research and the process of rural constitution to the local and community leaders.
2. Organize the rural constitutional council as the function of rural constitutional development and implement the participatory public policy from the rural constitution.
3. Revising the rural contexts and issues and design the data collection and analysis with the local and community leaders.
4. Communicate for the better understanding on the rural constitution with local and community leaders and representatives from each village and local organization as well as in the wider public.
5. Organize the public hearing for develop the rural constitution with people in community.
6. Revise the draft of rural constitution with the rural constitutional council.
8. Issue the rural constiution of Banyang community for implementation.
9. Follow and evaluate the output and impact of the rural constiution.

## Data Analysis

The content analysis has been applied for the data from the focus groups with the local and community leaders and representatives from the local organizations and groups in the formation process of rural constitution. After that, the research provides the conclusion and discussion based on the concept of rural constitutional development and participatory public policy.

## Research Results

### The Process of rural constitution of Banyang Community

The process of rural constitution of Banyang community happened from the cooperation between academicians, local and community leaders in resolving of communities' issues. Mostly, they focus on the issue of road safety and then they elaborated to several issues such as pollution, heath, economy and drug. Also, the pandemic of virus Corona 2019 (Covid-19) became the one major issue and challenge of community. Therefore,



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the development of rural constitution has also derived from the communities' awareness in their community issues and purposes for resolving of problems together.

In this regard, the participatory process helps to develop the issues of rural constitution from discussion and agreement among local and community leaders and representatives from the villages and local organizations such as the local saving group, Health Promotion Hospital of Banyang sub-district, Wat Bot Agricultural Extension Office and Wat Bot Police Station. Then, they organize the rural constitutional council as the function for the rural constitutional development and implement the participatory public policy from the rural constitution. The rural constitutional council of Banyang community is including with 55 members from 1). Chief Executive of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization; 2). Deputy Chief Executive of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (1 person); 3). Chief Administrator of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization; 4). Sub-district headman; 5). Village headmen (10 persons); 6). Representatives from the villages (22 persons); 7). Representatives from social groups in the community (15 persons); and Representatives from local organizations (4 persons).

Then, the research uses the focus groups with the rural constitutional council for the process of drafting the rural constitution and revising of the rural contexts and issues. Subsequently, the issues of rural constitution are provided in four main issues as below:

1. Life and property safety of community such as a road safety, drug, gambling and social conflicts.
2. Environmental Management such as a community cleaning, a reducing of community pollution, a household waste management and the natural and community forest preservation.
3. Promoting the rural economy such as supporting for a home-grown vegetable and additional occupations.
4. Health promotion in the community: for instance, a promoting of family and health exercises, eliminating the Aedes mosquito larva, promoting a safety food, promoting the health care of elders, disable persons and psychiatric patients. Besides, the health issue also concerns on the prevention of the pandemic of Corona virus 2019 (Covid-19) within community.

After that the public hearing organized with the cooperation from local and community leaders and participation of villagers as well as the representatives from the local offices and organizations such as the local health-promoting hospital of Banyang sub-district, the Wat Bot police station and Wat Bot Agricultural Extension Office. The discussion in public hearing has



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contributed to the development of drafting of rural constitution which everyone agreed together. Then, the council of rural constitution revises the draft of rural constitution from the public hearing process again and issues the rural constitution of Banyang community by the Banyang Subdistrict Administrative Organization. The further step is the implementation and evaluation of the outputs and impacts of rural constitution which will conduct after three months of the research project.

### **The rural constitution and the participatory public policy**

The rural constitution of Banyang district issues in the 11 sections including to: the general section about the definitions in rural constitution such as tambon (subdistrict), village and social measure. The second section is about the road safety which enforces the drivers and riders to follow the land traffic act BE. 2522. For instance, the drivers have to fasten seat belts and the riders have to wear a helmet. Moreover, all cars and bikes have to pay for an insurance and do not drive more than 40 km./hour in the villages.

The section 3 is about a drug prevention: every member in tambon have to inform the information and clue about the drug to police or the village committee for prevention and resolve the problem together. The section 4 is about a prevention of the pandemic of Corona Virus-2019: everyone has to monitor and protect themselves from the pandemic of Corona Virus-2019 through wearing mask and applying the alcohol gel. Every government office, school, temple, restaurant and market have a measure in preventing the pandemic of Corona Virus-2019, and cleaning the containers and places, and providing the safety foods. Besides, everyone has to inject the vaccine for protection of the Corona Virus-2019, and eliminates the used mask and other infected wastes in their households.

The section 5 is about a health promotion. For instance, the head of family should promote their family members to do an exercise frequently. Meanwhile, the family should not abandon their children, the disable persons, the elders, the psychiatric patients and the patients.

The section 6 is about the rural economy. Every household should to reduce their expenses and attempt to increase the incomes and saving including do a household account every month. Moreover, every household should to crop a backyard-garden, feed animals or do the additional occupations based on the capacity of villages and areas. It is for enhancing the household income and support a good consumption of people.



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The section 7 is about the environmental preservation. Everyone is responsible for the natural preservation and cannot invade the forest, and hunting the preserved and wild animals. Besides, every household have a duty to clean and manage their households' landscapes including classify the wastes before dumping in the littering areas. Also, the community members should not dump their wastes in the public areas and the rivers or any actions that make a pollution or dirt in the community.

The section 8 is about society: all villages do not have any gambling, and do not sell the alcohol drinking and cigarette for the children under 18 ages including to the cultural and religious events and the amusement events in the villages and tambon. The section 9 is about the rural constitutional implementation. It focuses on communication and understanding toward the rural constitution in each village such as the public relations and monthly village meeting. To enforce the rural constitution, the section 10 and 11 regulates the punishment and reward in this rural constitution. For instance, in case of any whom violates the land traffic act BE. 2522 and the narcotics & psychotropics control law, they would be fined and punished according to the laws. And they have to serve for the community services for 4 hours such as cleaning the toilet in the temple and school.

Therefore, the participatory public policy that emerged from the rural constitution focuses on the community safety, health (included the prevention on the pandemic of Covid-19), environment and sustainable economy.

1. To enhance the community safety: every community member has to follow the land traffic act BE. 2522. Also, everyone has a responsibility to prevent and resolve the community troubles as well as beware the drug problem in the villages together.

2. To promote the community health through participation in the diseases control and health risk prevention. Besides, every household help to prevent the oviposition and destroy the larvae of *Aedes aegypti*. The family leaders promote the family exercises. Meanwhile, every community member has to prevent themselves from the pandemic of Corona virus 2019 such as inject the Covid-19 vaccine, wearing mask, frequently wash hands with water or alcohol gel and avoiding to stay in the crowed areas, if they are not injected with the Covid-19 vaccine.

3. To support the environmental policy by keeping the villages and houses cleaning. Also, every community have to promote the participation of people in waste management including organize the waste bank and the garbage disposal areas. Moreover, the community helps to promote the environmental awareness and reduction of pollution in the community.



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4. To promote the sustainable economy and to reduce the poverty of community through reducing the households' expenses, increasing the community incomes and saving. Also, every community promote a cultivation of backyard vegetable garden in their households. Moreover, the community supports for the additional occupation and upskill the professional skills for local people.

The participatory public policy would be included in the Local Development Plan of Banyang Subdistrict Administrative Organization for sustainable development in 2021. However, the new local election that would be held on August, 2021. It would be a crucial factor for a changing of community development plan. Nevertheless, the rural constitution that emerged from the public participation and decision-making become a strongly base for the sustainable community development of Banyang sub-district.

## Discussion

The development of a rural constitution contributes to the participatory process for community development. Participation appeared in the process of community meeting and sharing, deliberate and thinking together for solving the community issues. Then, it is the set-up of a community network in the form of the rural constitutional council. In this regard, the rural constitution became a tool for community development and participatory democracy. Also, it helps the community to resolve their problems with the agreement of community people. Accordingly, the research of Bongkoch Dararat (2018) found the community charter or community constitution is a law of commons of community that comes from the villagers' participation and the social contexts. It helps in conflict resolution and resolves the village's issues. Also, it is according to the principle of democracy because villagers can participate in decision making together (Dararat, 2018).

Accordingly, a participation is a key for development of democracy because it expresses the social awareness, desire and value of people under the common purpose in a decision-making and processing of the state. That is to say, it is the interactive communication between state and society for a properly decision- making in the public policy or the state actions with a support from people (Creighton, 2005). therefore, the community participation could be a continuous process that enables communities to develop and reach their potential and progress from individual action to collective social and political change both at the local and the state levels (Webler, 2001).



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Similarly, Enriqueta Aragonés and Santiago Sánchez-Pagés (2008) describes the participatory democracy is a process of collective decision making that combines elements from both direct and representative democracy. The participatory process of rural constitutional development is emphasizing on direct democracy which can be also viewed as a complete decision-making process, from setting the agenda for an issue to the last referendum vote (Schiler, 2007). Therefore, a common decision-making in the rural constitution of villagers is the one crucial part of the participatory democracy.

The participatory democracy is crucially for promoting the rights and freedom of people in political participation and in a decision making that affect them. It is compatible with the representative democracy of the modern nation-state which concerns on the rights and power of people where the representatives should be the mouthpiece of the people. Meanwhile, the Subdistrict Council and Subdistrict Organization or Municipality are a mechanism of participation and engagement between government and the citizens at local government level. Hence, the development of participatory democracy is demonstrated by various interfaces between communities and their elected representatives (Venter & Landsberg, 2011, p. 7).

In addition, the efficiency participation process could create the social capital and social empowerment of the community such as local group, organization and community network which is important for rural constitutional implementation and promote the participatory democracy of the community. According to Rotprasoeed and Boonsri (2018) found that the social capital of community is the essential thing for community democracy and understanding the political culture of Thai rural such as the families' relationship, local culture, and wisdom, and the rural informal and formal groups. In each community, they have different social capitals. Notwithstanding, the important factors for the participatory process in rural constitutional development are the cooperation from local and community leaders, and the social awareness of villagers in their community issues. Both factors also support the social empowerment and self-governance of the community.

### Suggestion

For the sustainable development of rural constitution, the public policy that occurred from the rural constitution should be included in the local development plan. Moreover, the rural campaign, public communication and local meetings are useful for the implementation of rural constitution.



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For the further studies, they might study the implementation policy or methods for successful support of the rural constitutional issues and public policy. The research design might apply the participatory action research (PAR) with the local leaders and villagers.

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