Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

The strengthening of local citizens: A cases study of Umong Sub-district Municipality, Lamphun Province and Korrum Sub-district Administration Organization, Uttaradit Province

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Article Info

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to take lessons and compare the methods, processes, and drives of promoting citizenship between Umong Subdistrict Municipality, Mueang District, Lamphun Province and Korrum Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Phichai District, Uttaradit Province and to create a citizenship process model that is consistent and appropriate to the local context. The research found lessons from these two case studies lead to the integrated model design of creating and developing sustainable citizenship consisting of three main components, namely, the creation of a prototype citizen that does not limit time from the past and present, creating community well-being with social mechanisms or capital, and creating community well-being with public activities of the state. There are five important factors that affect the building and development of the sustainable strength of citizens including; local administration of local government organizations, creating public spaces for activities, creating mutual benefits from various activities, the creation of an officially supported citizenship organization and creating a database of citizenship.

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Introduction

Over the past three decades of democracy development in Thailand, there have been empirical information of contradiction, violation and struggle from different viewpoints and competing interests among interest groups, especially in 2009 and 2014. The lesson learned from those incidents created common understanding among academics and public media that the development of democracy must build strong citizenship that realizes an individual's own rights and participation from the level of local community up to national level. (Laothamatas, 2011) There are many researches that have studied a method for such, but they are still under the dynamic of diversity of locality, and also, there is no clear answer which is practical enough to utilize for all communities. This research was undertaken with understanding to develop a model for strong citizenship among limitations and the diversity of each local field. "Citizenship" is the key to democracy development. In each country under democracy, the source of state

power, includes the executive power, which is The Government, and legislative power derived from the people. (Bhuyotin, Sintapanont, Naparat, & Kusolputchong 2008). In addition, people have to participate in various political processes and public policy processes (Wamanont, 2018) both locally and nationally. People who are actively engaged in political participation and participation in public affairs can be called "Citizen" which has a different definition from "People".

For most developing countries, people with strong citizenship, take ownership of sovereignty power, actively participate in public affairs and truly comprehend the fundamental of rights and power occasionally occur. (The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2019). This is regarding the variety of limitations such as economics issues, lack of educational opportunities and political culture. Moreover, the reproduction of socialization shapes the subject to dismiss their rights and their political participation.

Nevertheless, democratization has become mainstream in the current world over three decades since the collapse of communism in USSR in 1991. There has been the emergence of attentiveness among developing countries to develop their rights and power towards people to actively participate as Citizen under the democracy system. Several channels have been "constructed" to form and develop citizenship.

Since 1997, the Thai constitution has established power towards the people in many aspects, highly prioritising decentralization in the form of local administrative organization. (Tanchai, 2014) along with the certification of community rights as the rights according to the laws that could be against other rights.

This research is a case study to take lessons learned and compare the methods, processes and the promotion of citizenship between Umong Sub-district Municipality, Mueng District, Lamphun province and Korrum Tambol Administrative Organization, Pichai District, Uttaradit province. Another objective was to create a citizenship process model that is consistent and appropriate to the local context.

Literature Review

The Importance of Citizen

Citizens can help to increase participation behavior in a democratic political system more than by just voting. They can have the behavior of self-expression of sovereignty to the stage of initiating important public policy initiatives, participate in legislative initiatives and participate in development inspection process improvement of political mechanism and public administration People who have been promoted to citizenship must know rights, duties and responsibilities in economic, social, political contexts from local to national level and also global level, which is an important aspect for the nation and the world to be peaceful and prosperous (Potan, 2008).

Many academics have given various definitions of citizen. Tansiri (2008) defined the citizen as a person who does not just vote, but rather participates in the political process. They must have a political role at both local and national levels.

Wasri (2008) provided an opinion on citizen, stating that such person is a quality person with dignity of humanity, freedom, knowledge, and reason and participates in the political processes. Therefore, when forming a group and doing such with equality, it causes society to create a new structure in a horizontal way and bound by a psychological relationship with learning process and cooperation.

Charoenmueng (2008) pointed out that "Citizen" has to be used with the expression "Political Community"; there is no citizen without political community. In addition, citizen must have a public mind in order to participate in public affairs all the time. They must be a virtuous person and also must know both how to be a ruler and a subject.

Although the above definitions carry an ideal meaning in many aspects such as the cooperation with equality or new structure in horizontal or bonding with heart, is that possible with the long social context of capitalism and the political culture in vertical way? However, in societies with a democratic political system, the structure of political system has facilitated the said goal. Therefore, there is an effort in research to create a guideline to develop citizenship in the above definition.

The Definition of "Citizenship"

Hoskins et al. (2006) defined the word "Citizenship" as a role and duty to participate in the community and participate in politics where people have mutual respect. They have peaceful resolution that aligns with human rights and democracy. Tantisuntorn (2011) emphasized citizenship with public mind and taking into account the public interest beyond one's own benefits. They have corporate Social Responsibility and are able to develop in local and national leadership.

The study by Burikul, Sangmahamad, and Merieau (2011) discussed citizenship in Thailand. There were interesting findings that citizenship in Thailand has been

divided into three categories: Citizenship with an emphasis on culture, citizenship with the value for their communities and citizenship that values freedom, progress, and modernity.

In conclusion, citizenship is a customary status or role or legal regulation that certifies rights and powers and the duty of citizenship to citizens. The people who have "Citizenship" must have knowledge and understanding towards public awareness with responsibility to society as a whole at community and national levels.

Key Features of Citizenship

Citizenship must consist of important features which are responsibility to oneself, self-reliant, respect for equality, respect for differences and other's rights and having corporate social responsibility (Devaniramitkul, 2012) The Components of citizenship.
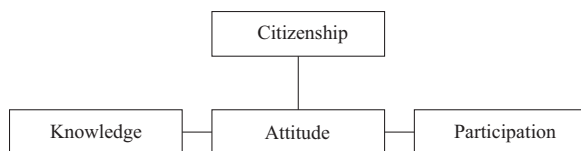

Figure 1   The components of citizenship
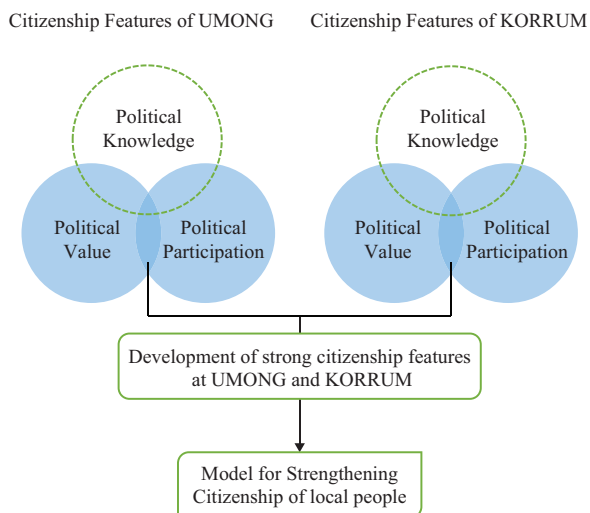
Conceptual Framework

Figure 2   Conceptual framework

Methodology

This research applied qualitative research methods combining focus groups and snowball sampling from different activity groups in both communities including village volunteer group, volunteer group, village chairman, elderly group, children and youth, community learning resources and executives and officers. In both local organization administrations, from among those various groups, senior citizens for 20 people and 20 people for new citizen, and 15 administrators, officers in local government organizations were selected. The sample group consisted of 55 people in each of two areas, 110 areas in total.

Apart from focus group, the researcher also used participatory observation process in the activities of civic groups mentioned above including activities that the group had done themselves in the mission according to the objectives of the group and activities that the group conducted with other groups in an integrated manner. There were also activities performed by groups in cooperation with local government organizations both with Umong Sub-district Municipality and Korrum Tambol Administrative Organization.

Data analysis applied 3 types of data analysis including: (1) Inductive Analysis, by summarizing and creating a data set from what appeared from group discussions and active observation in various activities of the sample group; (2) Descriptive Analysis, by describing and summarizing results from statistics that have limitations referencing demographic features; and (3) Content Analysis by describing the content and interpreting the documents obtained from the secondary data.

Result

Methods, process, driving, promoting citizenship development in the area of Umong Sub-district Municipality, Mueng District, Lamphun province.

There are 2 main ways to strengthen citizenship in their communities:

1. By using social mechanisms This is the existing social capital in the area by using various activities and traditions of the community such as Twelve-month Merit Event or Big Buddha Day Merit Festival. The activities stand for a space for meeting and exchanging ideas and enhance the relationship between members within the community, which leads to the formation of a culture of participation. This is an important foundation for indirect building strong citizenship by not causing trauma from forcing community members to participate voluntarily.

2. By creating participation mechanisms in the form of public projects or activities of the government. That is to say, relying on public projects or activities set by the government to assign roles to members within the community by focusing on creating participation and volunteering at the same time such as Happiness Volunteer Project, and the Elderly Care Project (Care giver), which is a joint operation between Umong Sub-District Municipality and members within the community.

In both of the above methods, there is a working process that is interrelated. The Umong Subdistrict Municipality uses social mechanisms to strengthen relations between senior citizens. Both formal leaders and informal leaders and new citizens in the area have a sense of belonging to the community. To encourage community members to feel the desire to participate in various community activities, the Umong Subdistrict Municipality is the place sponsor for the activity and acts as a liaison between senior citizens and new citizens who want to be a member of the Happiness Volunteer Group and the Elderly Care Project (Care giver). The municipality has established a budget to support the activities of citizens.

Another important element is, in the area of Umong Subdistrict Municipality, there is a Mahavijjalai Umong to create citizens run by Umong Subdistrict Municipality with support from the Thai Health Foundation, which is the main institution for instilling public awareness among members of the community and connecting citizen's network between the area and outside the area to exchange knowledge for local innovation to be used to upgrade the creation of public policy to be more diverse.

Mahavijjalai Umong has an important role in supporting Methods of promoting citizenship development of people in the area. In summary, the promotion of strong citizenship development in the area of Umong Subdistrict Municipality is as shown in the following Figure.

Korrum Subdistrict Administrative Organization, Uttaradit province has a clear method of strengthening citizenship for members of their own community through the creation of "prototype" or Model of citizens by relying on historical people in the community, and the people that are respected within the community as follows.

Create a "model" citizenship by using a historical person of the community who is respected by the people in Phichai District, namely, Phraya Pichai Daphak, to be a role model of citizens with courage, honesty, sacrifice for the common good and create a prototype of citizens through the project "Petch–Korrum" There is a short term goal which is to focus on creating citizens with leadership with a creative and public mind with a long-term goal of creating networks "Petch-Korrum" between senior citizens and new citizens for the sustainability of strong citizens in the area. This begins with searching for people who have behaved according to tradition, community and public mind with regular assistance to the community and respected by people in the area. The person selected according to the said qualifications will be defined as "Petch-Korrum", or current model citizens, who can be a role model for community members. As well as having Phraya Pichai, the hero in the history of Phichai District, as a model and as inspiration to motivate the community, when creating the prototypes of the "Petch-Korrum", later, promote networking between senior citizens with
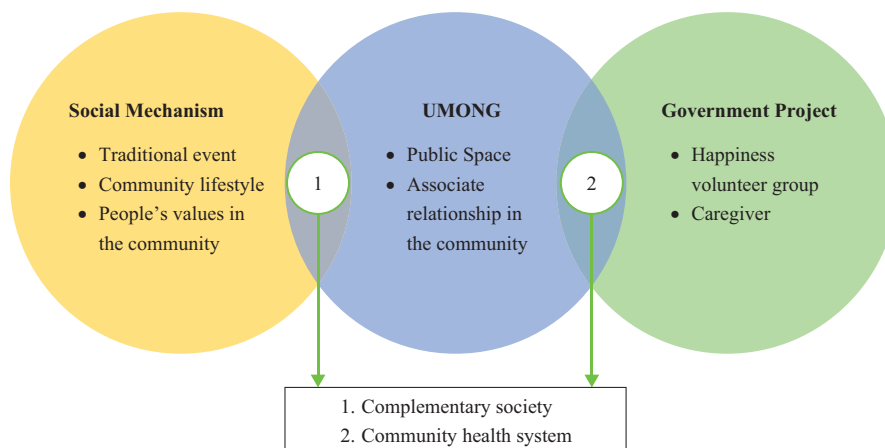

Figure 3   The promotion of strong citizenship development in the area of Umong Subdistrict Municipality

new citizens who are ready to step up to become the new generation of "Petch-Korrum" through various public activities together such as the project to adjust the living environment for the elderly, Lo Kiang Nan Ban Kong Ko Project and the Lam Duan School for Young Children with the network of "Petch-Korrum" acting as a leader in persuading community members to participate in the said activities. With methods like this, they can be confident that the community will have sustainable strong citizens. This can be summarized as follows in Figure 4.

Model for Sustainable Civil Strength Development

By taking lessons from methods, processes, driving, promoting the development of strong citizenship of the people in the case study area in both areas mentioned, it can be summarized from the findings that the process for strength development of citizens of Umong Subdistrict Municipality uses social mechanism and public projects or public activities to create good health systems for the community, both physically and mentally.

For the process of strengthening citizenship development at Korrum Subdistrict Administrative Organization, a method of creating a "prototype" of citizens based on historical figure and senior citizens that are respected by people in the area is used to inspire new citizens.

When the important findings from the lessons learned from both areas of the study are integrated, it can be concluded that the model for creating and developing sustainable citizenship consists of 3 main components as follow.

1. Creating a prototype citizen both from formal leaders and informal leaders.

2. Creating community well-being with social mechanisms.

3. Creating community well-being with public projects or activities in order to create community health that is conducive to strengthening citizens.

There are 5 factors that affect sustainable building and development of citizenship strength as follows:

1. Local Administration of the local government organization.

2. Creating public spaces for use in carrying out various activities.

3. Creating mutual benefits from those activities for sustainability.

4. Creation of an official support organization to certify citizenship with local administrative organizations hosting the members gathering and determining the important structure of the organization including determining roles and responsibilities together with citizens.

5. Creation of a data base system used as a space for collecting information of both old and new citizens by using the citizen registration system and creating communication channels such as Line Application and Facebook Page. This includes teaching how to use the said tools/channels to the citizens in the community that are assigned to supervise, especially the elderly citizens, in order to reduce the gap between age and communication by using technology as much as possible. This is in order to create a communication mechanism for citizens in the community, both old and new citizens, as well as being used as a channel for creating citizen participation activities, which in the long run, will contribute to creating a culture of sustainable participation.
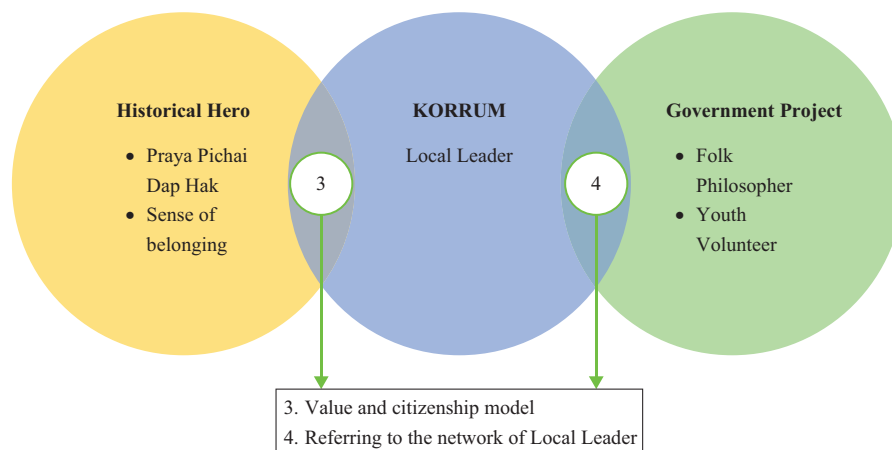

Figure 4   The promotion of strong citizenship development in the area of Korrum Subdistrict Administrative Organization

The model for creating and developing sustainable citizenship, therefore, has objectives and goals to search for both senior citizens and potential newcomers in the community, to study the problems and obstacles on the administration of community affairs including being able to suggest solutions to problems for the community. In addition, this model also focuses on the process of learning and transfer of knowledge as well as integrating cooperation between senior citizens and new citizens and local administrative organizations from collaborating in various activities for development and strengthening citizenship to be able to participate in the public policy process of the local government sustainably. From the stage of policy formation Policy formulation implementing policies and evaluating policy achievement. As summarized in the Figure of sustainable building and development of citizenship strength as follows in Figure 5.

The comparison process of driven strong citizenship development between Umong Sub-district Municipality, Lamphun province and Korrum Sub-district Administration Organization, Uttaradit province is as follows in Table 1.
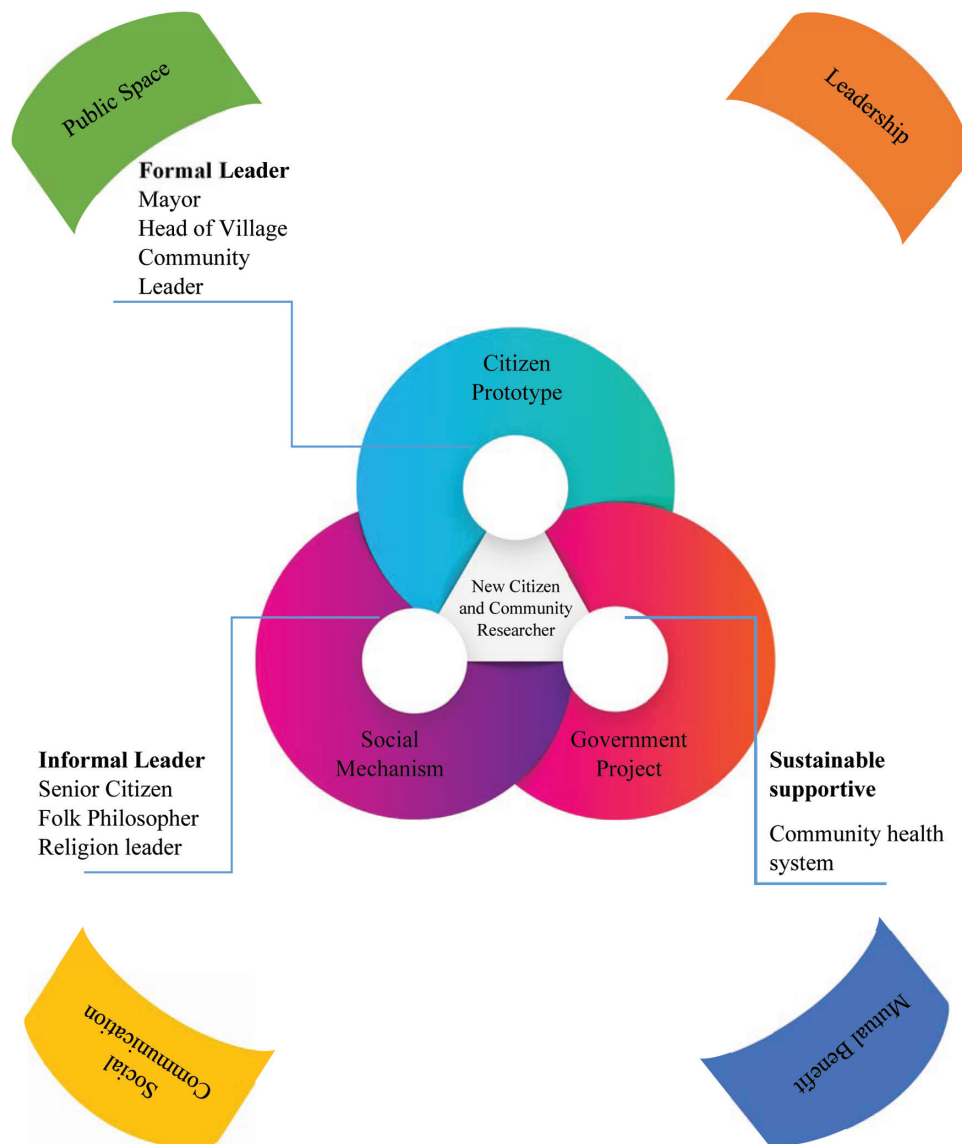

Figure 5   Model for creating and developing sustainable citizenship

Table 1 The summary table of transcription lessons comparing Umong Sub-district Municipality, Lamphun Province and Korrum Sub-district Administration Organization, Uttaradit Province

	Umong Sub-district Municipality	Korrum Sub-district Administration
Mechanisms Driven	They use social mechanism and public projects or public activities to create good health systems for the community, both physically and mentally	They use the method of creating a "prototype" of citizens based on historical figure and senior citizens that are respected by people in the area
Guidelines for the development of new generations	Create a new generation of citizens through "Kon-dee Kon-keng Kon-samkan" activities	Create a new generation of citizens through "Petch –Korrum" activities

From the table, the differences in building citizenship through different activities are explained, such as, Umong use public projects or public activities to create good health systems, or Korrum use the method of creating a "prototype" of citizens based on a historical figure and senior citizens that are respected by people in the area. They also created new generation citizens in different ways.

Discussion

From the important findings of the case study in both areas, it can be seen that building strong citizenship in small communities with social costs such as historical background, historical figures or people who are good and outstanding and talented at present can achieve great success.

This is because of members of the small community have some relative connections or local area connections. Once there are prototypes as a mechanism for connecting relationships among members of the community, they can design activities from community customs with the coordinated and supporting budget from local administrative organization for those activities.

At the same time, the emphasis on preserving senior citizen, together with creating new citizens for sustainability of strong citizenship in the area, is another important aspect.

However, there is one fact that must be accepted, which is the local communities at present are concerned about an open community. People in the new generation of communities have the opportunity to leave the community to study or work outside the community. At the same time, new people from outside may come to be new members in the community. This dynamic can therefore be an obstacle in creating a sustainable city in the area. Local government organizations in the area must be flexible to the above mentioned and monitor the movement of people in the community, both the outflow and the new inflow in order to adjust the activities or strategies to maintain the sustainability of citizenship in the area.

This research also provides an additional suggestion that activities in the community that will be an area for citizens to come together should be activities in an integrated manner that take into account the diversity of citizens in terms of age, occupation, income or gender. Also, it should be an activity that is going to develop or solve community problems, where the citizens who participate will together benefit from that activity.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest

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