

ARTICLE

Analysis of Social Innovation of Housing Development in Thailand: A Case Study of Baan Man Kong Project

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Abstract

The article presents a comprehensive analysis of the phenomena emerging from social and economic transformations in both developed and developing nations. It aims to investigate and distill insights from the process of addressing slum housing issues in Thailand through the lens of a community-based approach. This study delineates that the cornerstone of effective community-based housing development in Thailand lies in the synergistic collaboration between the government and local community networks, including residents and community users. These collaborations have significantly influenced urban and housing development. The tangible outcomes of these processes are evident in the enhancement of social, human, and economic capital, collectively contributing to the mitigation of social inequality.

Key words: Urban Poor, Social Capital, Collaboration, Community Networks, Baan Man Kong Project, Baan Man Kong Project Index

1. Introduction

The Ban Man-Kong Project, initiated in 2003, represents a government-endorsed initiative administered by the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI), a public organization, with the specific mandate of addressing housing issues in impoverished communities across Thailand. The project, under the auspices of CODI and the Baan Man-Kong Office, aims to assist the poor, particularly those evicted from private lands and those residing in canal houses, which exacerbate urban flooding issues. This initiative seeks to

provide these marginalized populations with access to safe, stable housing and public services, thereby reducing inequality.

Emphasizing a community-based approach, the Ban Man-Kong Project has evolved into a more holistic development process. Since its inception, the project has launched 10 pilot initiatives with 146 million baht and, as of 2023, has implemented 3,000 Ban Man-Kong projects and 265,382 households following these established guidelines. Scholarly analysis, including that by Somsuk (2005), acknowledges that the Ban Man-Kong Project transcends mere physical housing development. It encapsulates a comprehensive model of physical, social, and economic development, persisting for over two decades.

Notably, the government has played a crucial role in supporting and financing the poor in slum areas. It encourages participation in the Ban Man-Kong program, offering initial funding of subsidy from 80,000 baht (2003) to 89,800 baht (2020) for eligible households. This funding is intended to enhance housing infrastructure and community environmental maintenance.

Given the significant impact of this initiative, our research team is keenly interested in exploring the development of housing for the impoverished in Thailand. This exploration is viewed as a form of social innovation contributing to national development. The team aims to investigate whether the Ban Man-Kong Project has fostered a learning ecosystem in housing, which in turn could be a driving force behind successful national development strategies.

2. The research objective

The research objective is to study and extract knowledge in the process of solving slum housing problems in Thailand by using the concept of the Community-Based Approach. This research is to comprehensively analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the Baan Man-Kong project, a community-based housing development initiative in Thailand. This study aims to explore the impact of the project on improving the living conditions of the urban poor, with a specific focus on the development of social and human capital, and the enhancement of community resilience and sustainability. Key aspects of this research include:

- 1) Assessment of Community-Based Development Approaches,
- 2) Evaluation of Collaborative Networks,
- 3) Analysis of Governmental and Institutional Roles,
- 4) Exploration of Policy Implications and Recommendations, and
- 5) Measurement of Project Outcomes Using the Ban Man-Kong Index.

3. Literature Reviews

This paper provides a comprehensive review of social innovation, particularly focusing on developments since the 1980s. It highlights the divergence between social learning and social mobilization as distinct planning traditions. John Friedmann, an influential academic, emphasized the need for alternative approaches over mere revisions to traditional planning methods (Friedmann, 1987). Friedmann's normative perspective, favoring grassroots over top-down strategies, was more inspirational than the typical urban management strategies of state-led planning. He underscored the importance of public works, stressing collaboration and networking among groups. In contrast to conventional planning techniques, which Friedmann believed should be de-emphasized, he advocated for unconventional methodologies drawing from ethnography and anthropology to challenge the notion of "objective knowledge." His view of social learning was normative, favoring small, face-to-face group interactions and discounting state-driven learning approaches.

The concept of Social Capital, as proposed by Robert D. Putnam (1993), is highlighted as a critical element of social organizations. According to Putnam, social capital, characterized by trust, norms, coherence, and networks, can enhance societal efficiency. The creation of social capital begins with systematic thinking and positive social values among people and organizations.

James Coleman (1988) further elaborated on social capital, comparing it to other fundamental forms of capital in terms of productivity and potential for creating employment opportunities. Coleman posited that social capital, akin to physical and human capital, operates within the relational structures among individuals, emphasizing its intangible nature distinct from tangible assets like education or skills.

4. Research Methodology

The methodology of this study involves a combination of field surveys, on-site learning, consultations with subject-matter experts, and direct observations and interviews with community leaders. The research focuses on urban poor housing solutions implemented through community-based approaches. The study was conducted in several real-world settings, encompassing a diverse array of communities. These included Charoen Nimitmai, Gong Kayah Nongkam, Bang Bua, Sarn Chao Pho Somboon, Goh Soh Boh, Wanglang, Suan Phlu, Khlong Lam Nun Community, and the Uthaithani raft house settlement along the Sakae

Krang River in Nan Province. The methodology entailed in-depth studies, discussions, and interviews with community leaders, providing a rich understanding of the housing provision processes within these communities.

The research will utilize a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including field surveys, interviews with community leaders and residents, and analysis of secondary data, to achieve a holistic understanding of the project's impact and to draw conclusions that could inform future urban development and housing policies.



Figure 1: Existing Slum Encroaching in the Canal Sarn Chao Pho Somboon and Goh Soh Boh community



Figure 2: Slum Relocation in the Land and built Ban Man Kong (Sarn Chao Pho Somboon and Goh Soh Boh Ban Man Kong Community)

5. Results

This study was conducted to explore changes in the housing procurement process, particularly focusing on how housing development innovations contribute to national and community development. It emphasizes the empowerment of residents and considers the resolution of housing issues for the impoverished as a catalyst for social innovation. The innovations emerging from communities are instrumental in enhancing the quality of life by integrating economic, social, and cultural aspects into a comprehensive system. This approach is underpinned by over 20 years of experience in implementing the Baan Man-Kong program.

Empirical evidence gathered through this study demonstrates the effectiveness of this process. The research methodology involved interviewing community leaders and members, focusing on the construction of social capital and the role of social innovation in fostering robust community development. The study identified three key mechanisms driving the success of these initiatives: firstly, strengthening resident capabilities; secondly, fostering an understanding of development networking to facilitate cooperation across various sectors;

and thirdly, aligning these efforts with national development objectives. The cumulative effect of these mechanisms is the concurrent development of social and economic capital, illustrating the project's holistic impact.

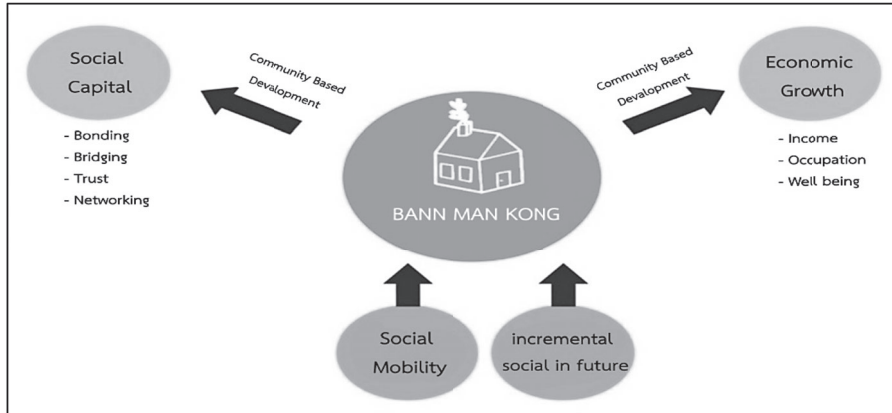


Figure 3: Development of Baan Man- Kong effects a social capital the development

5.1. Developing a strong community

5.1.1. Establishing a Financial System for the Poor:

This study explores two primary methods of financial support for the impoverished:

- (1) housing subsidization, offering direct financial aid, and
- (2) the promotion of a microfinance system tailored for the poor.

This system facilitates the creation of savings and enables applicants to secure housing loans through CODI, with community members serving as regular guarantors. Essential to this system is the requirement for individuals to demonstrate a commitment to becoming cooperative members and to maintain regular savings until a certain financial threshold is reached.

5.1.2. Empowering Residents:

The study acknowledges that impoverished individuals often face barriers in accessing financial resources, educational opportunities, and stable living conditions. The implementation of a cooperative organizational system is explored to foster savings discipline and active participation in resolving housing challenges. This includes involvement in housing design and future community management. The study finds that the success of these initiatives is heavily reliant on the strength and cooperation of the residents within and across communities. Communities with a history of successfully addressing housing issues can provide mentorship, offering guidance and negotiation strategies. This collaborative

approach extends to various aspects of community life, including health and welfare, with members contributing to these initiatives through monthly fees.

5.1.3. Establishing Intra- and Inter-Community Networks

This section of the study emphasizes the significance of network creation within and between communities as a crucial driver for development. It highlights the roles of various community members, including leaders, construction workers, and the elderly, in building social capital and fostering social innovation. The study examines how these networks enhance community strength and cooperation across different sectors, contributing to both social and economic capital development. A case in point is the challenge faced by raft house communities during drought conditions, where houses could not float, rendering them uninhabitable. The mobilization of volunteer technicians from other communities, including carpenters, to assist in repairs exemplifies the strength of these networks. These collaborative efforts not only addressed immediate housing issues but also facilitated a learning environment within the community network. The study includes a table detailing the characteristics and roles of these intra- and inter-community networks.

5.1.4. Analysis of Ban Man-Kong's Social Capital

The research explored community-based indicators to evaluate the sustainability of the Baan Mun-Kong community in the Greater Bangkok Metropolitan area. The findings indicate that 80% of Baan Man-Kong residents are satisfied with their community life, signifying robust community network systems and collaborative efforts in areas like house construction. This level of satisfaction points to significant access to social capital within these communities. The process of social capital accumulation in these communities involves creating partnerships and engaging in various activities, both within and among communities. These activities span economic aspects such as employment and the exercise of community rights, as well as participation in political activities, thereby strengthening community groups and networks. The study, conducted by Chaweewan and team (2020), underscores the importance of community-based development, highlighting the uniformity in the strength of these networks across different community groups.

5.1.5. Analysis of the Ban Man-Kong Index

The study incorporates the Human Development Index (HDI) framework to formulate the Ban Man-Kong (BMK) Index. Generally, the HDI is utilized to assess the quality of life across various regions, pioneered by the United Nations to gauge the developmental progress of populations in different countries. HDI encompasses three critical components:

- (1) Life Expectancy,
- (2) Education Index, and
- (3) Gross National Income Per Capita.

Employing the same methodology, the BMK Index is calculated using analogous factors specifically tailored to the Ban Man-Kong context, namely

- (1) Living Satisfaction,
- (2) Household Income, and
- (3) Social Capital.

The analysis involves categorizing data into distinct groups and synthesizing these findings in the final phase of the study. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of community development through the lens of the BMK Index. Notably, the study extends the application of the Ban Man-Kong project development indicators, applying them to broader community aspects such as home security and movement drivers. The findings reveal that the BMK Index values are approaching "1", indicating a high level of success in the project's objectives. This success is reflected in enhanced community happiness, income generation, and the development of social capital, all contributing significantly to national development.

The development of this outcome model, which led to the creation of the BMK Index, offers a comprehensive measure of community development. It underscores the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing social inequality, promoting equality in human rights, and enhancing habitat accessibility. This is particularly relevant in the context of housing and urban development processes for low-income societies, highlighting the project's impact on improving living standards and fostering equitable growth.

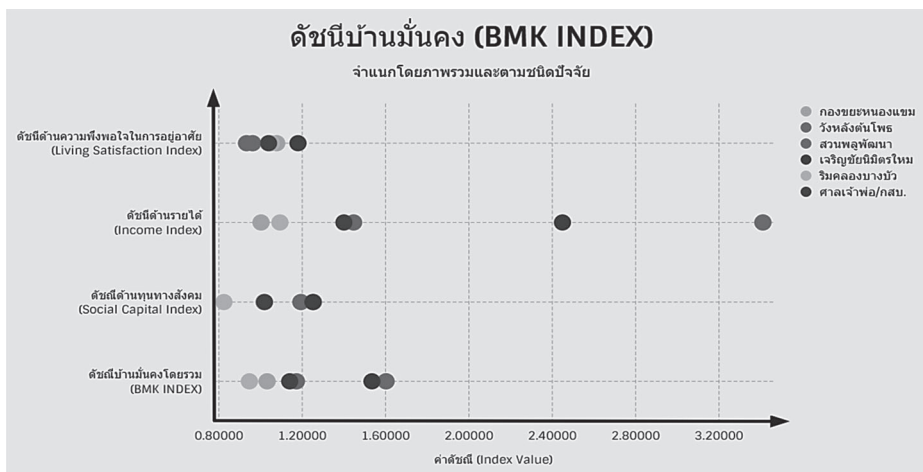


Figure 4: BMK index by overall and sub-index

The index by community is as follows:

- (1) Garbage Nongkam community = 1.03153
- (2) Wang Lang community = 1.60225
- (3) Suan Phlu community = 1.17225
- (4) Charoen Nimitmai community = 1.53471
- (5) Bang Bua community = 0.94648
- (6) Sarn Chao Pho Somboon and Goh Soh Boh community = 1.14015

5.2. Governance Collaboration

In the historical context, the National Housing Authority served as the principal agency for housing development in Thailand, collaborating with various auxiliary organizations such as the Metropolitan Electricity Authority, Metropolitan Waterworks Authority, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority. This collaboration led to the inception of the Slum Improvement Program in 1974. This program was primarily focused on the enhancement of pedestrian walkways, water supply, and electricity infrastructure, with the overarching aim of improving the living conditions in residential areas. It endeavored to foster a more livable environment for residents, while concurrently addressing broader societal and economic considerations. Despite its focus on livability, the program did not facilitate homeownership for the residents.

The year 2011 marked a pivotal moment for Thailand, as the country grappled with a severe flooding crisis, colloquially termed 'Thailand Submerge'. This calamity was largely attributed to blockages in water drainage systems, exacerbated by the presence of structures within 49 slum settlements along a 25-kilometer stretch of canal. This crisis elevated the issue to a national agenda, necessitating immediate action from government agencies. The situation prompted considerations of relocating these slum settlements to alternative locations. Addressing this exigent issue required a coordinated effort from multiple agencies, including the Crown Property Bureau, Royal Irrigation Department, Department of Fisheries, and infrastructure-centric organizations such as the Metropolitan Electricity Authority, Metropolitan Waterworks Authority, and the Drainage and Sewerage Department. The collaboration of the aforementioned agencies came together to develop Baan Man-Kong Project and relocated houses blocking the waterway onto land. With the collaboration of all sectors, it has been successful housing development.

5.3. Networking in Housing Development

The effectiveness of housing development hinges on the formation of collaborative networks comprising residents and community leaders, who work collectively to address

housing challenges. A key factor in the success of the Baan ManKong project is the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge within the community. An illustrative example of this collaboration is the mutual assistance offered between communities in housing construction, particularly evident in projects like raft house settlements and the renovation of deteriorating houses in low-income areas. Such cooperation, leveraging community networks, plays a pivotal role in mitigating construction costs.

5.4. Emphasis on Community-Based Development

In the realm of community-based development, the residents are integral to driving solutions for a spectrum of housing-related issues. This includes not just the physical aspects of housing needs and construction but also the broader challenges of environmental management, wastewater treatment, and financial planning within the community. Central to this participatory approach is the residents' active involvement in organizing and implementing systems pertinent to community development.

One of the initial steps in this development process is the formation of cooperative member groups. These groups are tasked with tackling various challenges inherent in the housing development process. They are required to convene regularly, typically monthly, to deliberate and devise solutions pertaining to financial aspects, design considerations, and construction logistics. In these meetings, the community architect plays a vital advisory role, offering guidance that aligns with the residents' proposals and needs.

Furthermore, an essential component of this community-based approach is the establishment of a microfinance system within the community. This system is designed to facilitate manageable installment payments for housing, thereby enabling residents to financially contribute to and invest in their housing solutions. Such community-driven financial models underscore the collective effort and responsibility shared by the residents in shaping their living environments.

6. Discussion

6.1. Analysis of Planning Communication Efficacy

This study posits that effective planning communication predominantly occurs among residents who comprehend the planners' directives up to the internalization stage. It reveals that when residents are engaged merely in deliberation without reaching a level of internal communication, the information produced is often inadequate. This finding underscores the importance of ensuring that participants fully understand the planner's intentions, as this comprehension is instrumental in driving policy improvement. Consequently, the study

concludes that a productive planning document is generated when villagers grasp the planners' messages at a profound internalization level. Conversely, insufficient information arises from residents who engage primarily in surface-level deliberation without achieving deeper communal understanding.

6.2. Mobilization Process in Poverty Alleviation

The study examines the strategy of mobilizing the impoverished through group-based approaches that focus on shared challenges. This method facilitates the development of community resilience and empowers individuals within the community. It also underscores the importance of a network of community partners capable of effective problem-solving. The exchange of experiences and knowledge between communities, continual dialogue, and mutual assistance in construction and home repairs are pivotal in this process. This collaborative dynamic leads to the emergence of a shared community knowledge ecology, an "Ecology of Learning Community," exemplified by mutual understandings such as housing dimensions.

6.3. Synthesis of Knowledge Exchange in Ban Man-Kong Development

The study provides a synthesized overview of the knowledge exchange and distills the process of the Ban Man-Kong development. This synthesis highlights the outcomes of social innovation from various perspectives. By analyzing the exchange of ideas and knowledge within the Ban Man-Kong development framework, the study showcases how these interactions contribute to the broader landscape of social innovation. This approach not only examines the practical aspects of the Ban Man-Kong project but also delves into the underlying principles and methodologies that drive its success.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusions

This study evaluates the Baan Man-Kong program's effectiveness by examining its community-based development approach. The analysis reveals that members involved in the Baan Man-Kong initiative have experienced substantial growth in human capital, accruing significant social capital levels. A key outcome of this development is the heightened sense of happiness stemming from secure and standard house ownership, achieved through a community-driven approach. The government's engagement in resolving social issues through housing processes and community-based solutions has led to an elevated standard in the creation of human capital, social capital, and satisfaction in homeownership. Consequently,

the urban development and housing strategies employed align well with national development processes, advocating for integrated solutions that leverage human resources and prudent financial management.

However, the study notes that investments in housing and urban development need to be ongoing to ensure sustainability, with community-based development serving as a fundamental principle. An assessment of social capital, based on six key factors, indicates that the community-based approach has facilitated effective access to social capital at a commendable level. As a result, approximately 80% of the community reports satisfaction with their living conditions.

The Baan Mun Kong collective housing program has significantly benefited poor households. These benefits include access to comfortable and safe living spaces, standard utilities and sanitation, public areas for community activities, and active participation in decision-making processes. The program also fosters public communication, a comprehensive understanding of community rights and obligations, and a respect for development that avoids fragmentation. This holistic approach not only addresses immediate housing needs but also contributes to the overall well-being and empowerment of the community.

7.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, three key recommendations are proposed:

1) Nationwide Expansion of Urban Community Initiatives: It is recommended that the successful outcomes observed in the Baan Man-Kong project be expanded to reach a broader urban poor population across the nation. This aligns with the policy goal of eradicating slum communities and improving the living conditions of the urban poor. A primary focus should be on enabling these groups to secure stable employment, thereby ensuring their access to safe and healthy living environments and enhancing their overall happiness and well-being at home.

2) Enhanced Role of CODI: In the future, the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI) should amplify its role to more effectively address the needs of urban poor settlements. This enhanced role should be aligned with the national strategic plan, focusing on building robust, self-reliant communities. CODI's increased involvement and support can significantly contribute to the sustainable development of these communities, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet their diverse challenges.

3) Assessment of the Baan Man-Kong's Value: Finally, it is recommended to continue and refine the assessment of the value derived from the Baan Man-Kong project. This evaluation should emphasize the community as the foundational element of real development. By understanding and quantifying the impact of community-based approaches, policymakers and

practitioners can better tailor their strategies to the unique needs and strengths of each community, thereby ensuring more effective and sustainable outcomes.

These recommendations are aimed at not only continuing the positive impacts observed in specific projects but also at scaling these successes to a national level, ensuring that the benefits of community-based development are experienced widely across urban poor populations.

Acknowledgement

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The faculty members of the Department of Housing have been particularly impressed by the works of Professor ISHIHARA, notably in his innovative approach to housing design, with a specific focus on Cooperative Housing Communities. His design philosophy centers on tailoring homes to align with the lifestyles of the homeowners, incorporating a process that emphasizes collaborative construction efforts among project members. This approach aims to foster sustainable community designs. Additionally, Professor Ishihara's expertise extends to his role as an educator, where he has demonstrated proficiency in lecturing on housing policy and development within the Japanese context.

Notes:

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- Ban Man Kong Project: Initiated by the Thai government and assigned to the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI), this project, under the stewardship of the Baan Man-Kong Office since 2003, has been instrumental in addressing housing issues in impoverished communities across Thailand.
- Community-Based Approach: This strategy and operational guideline is predicated on the cooperation among groups of individuals residing in the same area. It encompasses working with target groups within these communities and is recognized as an effective method for fostering collaboration, particularly in the realm of disaster prevention.

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