THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESS OF
PRAICHUMPOL AND BANDONG COMMUNITIES,
PHITSANULOK PROVINCE, THAILAND

Thannapat Jarenpanit
Department of Political Science, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Phitsanulok, 65000, Thailand

*Corresponding Author email: Fugith@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT
The participatory process is very important for community development. The participants expressed the social awareness and empowerment of villagers in solving the community problems and devote for the benefits of their communities. In this research, it applied the participatory process by using rural constitutional development. The article showed the case study of two communities (Praichumpol and Bang Dong) in Phitsanulok province, the lower Northern part of Thailand. It focuses on the process of rural constitutional development from a formation of the rural constitution to the adoption of the rural constitution. The research results found that the rural constitution begins from the process of cooperation among local and community leaders, academicians, local organizations, civil society, and the community. Then, it is organizing a meeting for sharing and proposing ways to solve the communities’ problems. After that the public hearing process organized for drafting and revising the rural constitution of the community, before they adopted the rural constitution together. Therefore, the rural constitutional development contributed to the participatory process of community which is the foundation of community-based participatory democracy. The major factor of participation comes from social awareness in the community issues, cooperation among local and community leaders, and civil society, academicians and local organizations. The rural constitution reflected the aspires and demands of villagers in health, economic, environment, and social development.

INTRODUCTION
Since the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 1997 and 2007 had been promulgated, it has led to the local decentralization and local democracy development in Thai provinces. The constitution supported the local self-government and the rights of local people in political participation and the process of local development within their places.

The consequence of the constitution has led to a growing of Thai civil society and a spread of self-reliant community concept among locals. In the meantime, the government attempted to support the local administrations and communities in the self-government and development of local groups and networks such as the city council and the community organization council.
Meanwhile, the rural constitution has been invented as social innovation for community self-government. It is expected that the rural constitution could contribute to the development of community leaders and finding the real demands and problems of local and community. It aims to develop the rural projects and community rules which come from the participation process of villagers. Hence, the rural constitution becomes the tool of community development under the concepts of community self-government and self-reliant community. The significant things are the participation of people in thinking and acting together under the rural constitution process. Moreover, the rural constitution could contribute to the common rule of community which comes from the common agreement among villagers. Subsequently, the rural constitution could support the community self-government and the development of local democracy.

However, the development of the participation process and the rural constitution is a challenge for local communities. It needs understanding and cooperation among the local/community leaders and villagers in the process of participation. The major factors are the desire and social awareness of local people in their problems and enthusiastic to change or resolve it. Hence, it is needed to study what are the factors related to the development of community participation and how the rural constitution process could be used as a tool for community development. In this regard, the article demonstrates the participation process of two communities from the formation of the rural constitution to the rural constitution drafting of Phitsanulok province, Thailand. Those are the Praichumpol community in the city of Phitsanulok, and Ban Dong community in Chattrakan district.

The objectives are: to study how the participation process has been developed in these two communities of Phitsanulok; and what are the factors related to the development of the participation process through the rural constitution. Furthermore, the conclusion provides how the participation process could promote the development of participatory democracy and community self-government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Frances Dunn Butterfoss (2006) described community participation as a social process in which groups with shared needs living in a certain geographical area actively identify needs, make decisions, and set up mechanisms to achieve solutions. Communities may be engaged to use and coordinate their resources of personnel, time, money, goods, and services in a broad range of structures and strategies (Butterfoss, 2006).

(George et al., 2015) defined the community participation as the active group participation or participation of a person as a representative of the group in activities
where they not only provide ideas but are also involved in the intervention (Haldane, 2019).

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. In this regard, Thomas Webler, etc. (2018) described the community participatory process in 4 steps (WEBLER, 2001):

1. The legitimate process that is a participatory decision-making process. The decision should be made by consensus. Meanwhile, it should be provided with the local knowledge, information, and evidence to support the critical issues of community and recommendations. All information and issues should be disclosed and brought to the agenda, while everyone is invited to participate.

2. Promote a search for common values: it is a process that promotes a regional sense of awareness and a regional sense of place or the sense of belonging of people. It considers as the foundations which could contribute to the policy-making, while people share concerns about their communities, area, and engage in reflective and collaborative dialogue to develop policies that can benefit a community.

3. The democratic process of fairness and equality: it is the process of committing with equality and fairness. Also, it is the set-up of the community council or community organization and network.

4. The process of enforcement of the leadership: it is a process that develops the decision-makers who gain popular acceptance and legitimacy from the community memberships. In addition, it is the process that promotes respectfulness and responsibility in the community.

Consequently, the community participation would start from sharing needs and decision-making with a consensus. The process of sharing should be provided with local knowledge, evidence supports, and analysis. It would enhance social awareness in community issues and develop collaborative dialogue. Then, the public policy, as well as the community rules, will be created within the community. This is a process of democracy in which people have the rights to share their opinions with equality and fairness, and making a common agreement. Meanwhile, the community network or community organization would be set up with the participation process and develop the leadership of community people.

**THE RURAL CONSTITUTION PROCESS**

The Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) defined the meaning of the rural constitution that it is the constitution that the rural or local people designed and agreed as the common rule together (Organization), 2016).
The National Health Commission Office concluded the meaning of the local health constitution that it is 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 is derived 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).

Moreover, the process of rural constitutional development could be divided into 7 steps: 1). Studying the concepts and methods of rural constitution development from the model areas; 2). Setting the local health constitution committee in communities; 3). Organize the public hearings for the formation of a local constitution; 4). Revise the draft of the rural constitution with the acceptance of people; 5). Organize the public hearings for revising the draft of the rural constitution; 6). Rural constitution drafting, and 7). Promulgate the local constitution. Then, it is the implementation process of the rural constitution. The community could issue the rural constitution to be the law of the community, an agreement, and a common rule.

Meanwhile, 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, the 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).

Furthermore, Bongkoch Dararat (2018) studied the local constitution development in the Paji community of San Patong district in Chiang Mai of Thailand, and she explained the meaning of rural constitution as the law in action and community rule. Her research shows the local constitution comes from the acceptance among villagers. Thus, it is the law of commons. However, the rural constitution is not the state law, but people follow it because it is the law of the community. It begins with the demands and conditions of communities (Dararat, 2018).

Accordingly, the research of Chamnan Sudsa-ad (2016) which studies the model of waste management for healthy community development of Ban Tungnangkeaw of La-Ngu district, Satun province. It found that the issue of waste is related to the belief, behavior, attitude, and perspective about the litter of people. Hence, the development of a model of waste management has to start studying and analyzing the issue with the community together. Then, it has to set up the group of waste management which
joined by the local people, the vendors in the markets and the government sector in the area, to create the plan and common agreement for solving the waste issue. The common agreement becomes the common rule or the rural constitution for the community to solve the waste problem. Thus, the local constitution is depended on the issues and demands of people in the community (Sudsad, 2016).

In conclusion, the rural constitution is the community rule or the common law of villagers or local people. The principle of rules is different in each community because of the difference in desires, issues, demands, and contexts of communities. Meanwhile, the process of the rural constitution is related to participation and social empowerment among the community, government sector, private sector, and people sector. Hence, the process of rural constitution development is an open space for everyone to participate and freely share their ideas, actions, follow and gain the benefits together. The process of rural constitution development could contribute to the participatory democracy in the local or community as the conceptual framework below:

![Conceptual framework of rural constitutional development](image)

**Fig. 1**: Conceptual framework of rural constitutional development

*Source:* By the author

Consequently, the rural constitution is the community rule which comes from the demands of community people as the general will. This community rule is different in each community based on the demands, contexts, and agreements of people in communities. However, the main 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.

**METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS**

This research applied participatory action research as the methodology of this study. It focuses on the participation process of the community and using the action research evaluation to measure the research process and outputs. Accordingly, the research divides the step into seven steps:
1. Set up the academic team and community coordinator in the area with the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization) and the civil volunteer leaders in two districts of Phitsanulok province.

2. Studies and explores the capacity of communities in two districts of Phitsanulok from coordination with the Community Organizations Development Institute (Public Organization), and the civil volunteer leaders. Then, the team selected the two communities in Phitsanulok. Those are the Praichumpol community and the Ban Dong community.

3. Communication with the local administration and community leaders about the project and how to develop the community.

4. Develop the draft of the rural constitution through the set up the local committee and/or organizing the public hearing about the local issues and a rural constitution.

5. Conclusion of the issues and demands of local people, and issuing the drafting of the rural constitution in the communities.

6. Adoption of a rural constitution with a common agreement or consensus.

**RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The results of research studies found that the formation of a rural constitution occurred from the cooperation and participation of local leaders, academicians, civil society, local organizations, and villagers. Furthermore, the social awareness of communities is very important for rural constitutional development. Totally of rural constitutioonal contents are about community issues and demands such as health, economics, environment, and society. The drafting of the constitution comes from the agreement among local and community leaders and villagers. Meanwhile, the supports of local administration and local leaders are the major factor for the successful development of the rural constitution. The details of each community are as the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Formation of Rural Constitution</th>
<th>Issues of Rural Constitution</th>
<th>Factors of Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Praichumpol</td>
<td>The rural constitution comes from the cooperation and participation among villagers, local and rural leaders, teachers, monks and doctors in the local health-promoting hospital. In addition, some of the local leaders and staff also attended</td>
<td>1. Community participation in waste issues.</td>
<td>1. The strong of community leaders and local leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Manage the stray dogs in the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Asking the villagers to preserve the five precepts in Buddhism.</td>
<td>2. A social awareness of community people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Promote the health of people in every age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Organize the public space for exercise of people in community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I: Conclusion of Rural Constitution of two communities:
the training program for the development of a rural health constitution supported by the National Health Commission Office (NHCO). Then, they analyzed the local issues and developed the draft of the rural constitution, and proposed the draft of the constitution in the meeting agenda of local leaders. Finally, they organized the public hearing and created the common agreement for the rural constitution together with the villagers and local network.

Ban Dong

The rural constitution emerges from the waste issue of community and local administration. The support of local and community leaders. Hence, the drafting of rural constitution comes from the local administrative rules in waste management of 2019. Then, the rural constitution announced with the local agreement to improve the waste problem of community.

1. Campaigning the waste management and environmental activities un community to encourage the environmental consciousness of people.
3. Issuing the community laws in waste management and environmental preservation.
4. Organize the cycle bank for support the local income and motivate people in waste management.
5. Provide the common agreement among communities and nearby communities together.
6. Forbidden of burning waste in the household areas.
7. Provide the warning signs for a waste dumping in the community and fine for 2,000 baht for the law-breaker.
8. Forbidden people to pour or dump the waste and waste water in the public places, roads, canals and rivers.

Sources: (Jarernpanit, 2019)
THE PROCESS OF RURAL CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In this part, I will describe the process of the rural constitutional development of two communities. Then, I will compare the process of the rural constitution to show the difference in communities’ contexts. Firstly, I will start with the Praichumpol community. The process of rural constitution of Praichumpol happened from the cooperation between academicians, Sukkha Punya Civil Society (the civil sector), and local leaders about resolving of communities’ issues. Then, they proposed the agenda of the rural constitution in the meeting among local leaders and community leaders.

After that, the representative of the community attended the rural constitutional workshop in Phitsanulok, which supported by the National Health Commission Office (NHCO) of Thailand. Subsequently, the first draft of the rural constitution created and is proposed in the meeting of local leaders again. Then, they have set up the committee of the rural constitutional development of Praichumpol district. The committee is including with 60 persons from the municipality office, the local health-promoting hospital, community leaders, school, temple, the women’s club, the elderly club, the club of the physically handicapped, non-formal educational school and health volunteers. The committee consulted together about the first draft of the rural constitution and improved it.

Then, the public hearing for revising and sharing about rural constitution organized at the local health-promoting hospital of Praichumpol district with the committee, the academicians from Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, and 60 representatives from communities in Prachumpol district. They divided the issues of the community into three specific issues: social and environment; health; and economic. Hence, the first draft of the rural constitution has been revised successfully and accepted together. The further step is the announcement of the rural constitution of the Praichumpol community.

Meanwhile, the rural constitution of Ban Dong community occurred from the cooperation and meeting among academicians from Rajabhat University, Sukkha Punya Civil Society (the civil sector), local and community leaders. Then, the representative of the community attended the rural constitutional workshop in Phitsanulok, which supported by the National Health Commission Office (NHCO). After that the first draft of the rural constitution has been created, it focused on the waste issue of the community. The draft has been proposed in the meeting of the local and community leaders of Ban Dong district. In this process, they employed the local administrative rules in waste management of 2019 with the rural constitution. Then, they organized the public hearing in the community and revised the rural constitution. The future step is the issuing of the rural constitution in waste management of the Bang Dong district.

From all the above mentioned, the process of rural constitutional development started from the cooperation among local and community leaders, the academicians and the
civil sector. The major process of participation in the drafting of the rural constitution, organizing the local meeting and public hearing. Also, the supports of local administration or municipality is important with the development of rural constitutions such as the places, staff, and accessories.

However, the differential development of the rural constitution between two communities is the relationship between the local and community leaders, the network of community, and the contexts of community. That is to say, the Praichumpol community located in the city of Phitsanulok. So, they have to work with many communities in the district. That’s why the strong relationship between the local and community leaders is very important as well as the network of the community with the civil sector, private sector, and local organizations. Therefore, they have to organize the Praichumpol committee for rural constitutional development, while they provided the draft of the rural constitution in several sections to respond to the several demands of communities.

On the other hand, the Ban Dong community is a small rural district located far from the city of Phitsanulok. Local and community leaders play an important role in promoting the rural constitution in the community. Also, they interested in the specific problem of the community first. That is the waste issue. They use the rural constitution as a tool for community development and searching for the cooperation and agreement among communities in their district.

In conclusion, it can describe the process of rural constitutional development in the flowchart below:

![Flowchart of Rural Constitutional Development](image)

**Fig. 2:** The process of rural constitutional development  
*Source:* By the author

**CONCLUSION**

The development of a rural constitution has resulted in 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 a local group or committee. In this regard, the rural constitution became a tool for community development and the foundation of participatory democracy. Meanwhile, it also 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).

The common decision-making in the rural constitution of villagers is the one crucial part of participatory democracy. In this regard, Enriqueta Aragones 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).

Consequently, participatory democracy can be viewed as part of the process of a rural constitution, while the rural constitution can contribute to community development. Furthermore, it changes the rural tradition of villagers to be more democratic culture from the expression of opinions and participation in solving and management of rural problems. Also, they can propose public policy from the process of the rural constitution to the local administration. This makes them stronger in a community in working with their local government, and it promotes the community and local self-governance.

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. Like as (Rotprasoe & Boonsr, 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. For instance, the Pracichumpol community can create its own committee and network for rural constitutional development and implementation with other issues of the community. Meanwhile, Ban Dong uses the rural constitution for making the agreement and cooperation with other communities to solve their waste issue.

Nevertheless, 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.

**Acknowledgements**

This research work is supported by the Project of the local health constitution supported by the Sukka Punya Civil Society and National Health Commission Office. I would like to say thank you to Penporn Tangpatikan, Sunert Thongkamphong, Chartrat Kreahong and Kanchana Bunmark for their supports and a good team.

**Reference:**


Dararat, B. (2018). Changing in the Thai Rural Community: The conflict management. *Proceedings of The National Conference 2018 of Law*, 64–81. https://www.law.cmu.ac.th/lasc/conference/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/09/0%e0%b8%aa%e0%b9%88%e0%b8%a7%e0%b8%99%e0%b8%99%e0%b8%b33-2.pdf


