From "OTOP" to "OSOP"

Empowering the slum through rural development

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There are always people who benefit from a slum continuing to be a slum. Every slum has its own mafia which benefits from things remaining exactly the way they are – police, drug peddlers, slumlords, local politicians, outsiders. They will fiercely protect their system if they sense it is being threatened. This is not something easy, this community upgrading. All the slums in the world have their dark powers and dark influences. The question is - do community people have enough power to challenge that control and change it, or negotiate with it? Only when the poor organize themselves and come together can they break through this. The leaders and committee members in these communities get no salary, no benefits. They have to be clean if people are going to listen to them and trust them. This is the real upgrading of poor communities - the upgrading of people. Slum upgrading is about upgrading people’s confidence, their competence, their relationships, not just about improving their physical circumstances.

Somsook Boonyabancha, Managing Director of Community Organisations Development Institute
Acknowledgements

The train chuffs slowly towards Hualamphong train station in central Bangkok. On the horizon my eye catches the grand glass buildings while simultaneously getting dimmed passing dangerously close to the slum abreast the train. These two realities fascinates me and nowhere else is the inequalities more visible than in the urban realities.

My interest for urbanization and social transitions developed in first year in college in the Water, sanitation, health and urbanization course held by Klas Sandström. With enthusiasm, great knowledge and inspirational lectures I knew that my future education would focus on issues concerning socio-economical development, building tools of empowerment and changing our World by involvement. I’ve had the honour to have Klas Sandström as my supervisor of this thesis whom I am very grateful to. Our discussions have motivated me and given me the opportunity, as a student and individual, to continue to dig deeper into fields of interest and expand the will for further research.

This study has been a developing process and during the spring semester of 2010 the engagement in research and writing have been both challenging and rewarding. I would like to take the opportunity to honour all lecturers throughout these three years of Bachelor studies, both in Sweden and South Korea. Through You I’ve had the opportunity to observe the World in vivid and interesting angles. The Chinese proverb says “Every journey of a thousand miles starts with one step” - may the eager for learning and knowledge never fade.

Nathalie Sajdo
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Abstract

Urbanization is nourishing the urban poverty. Half of the World’s population is urban citizens and the number is increasing. Solutions to challenges can come from new ideas as well as previous tools. This study investigates the feasibility of applying a rural development program, One Tambon One Product (OTOP), and developed into a slum development strategy. By choosing the Klong Toey slum in central Bangkok, Thailand, the study contextualizes the demographic characteristics, values and realities into a theoretically applied study.

The focal aim of the study is to increase the understanding of a bottom-up approach of socio-economical development. By formalizing the informal occupations and by highlighting alternative incomes for slum dwellers to integrate in participatory decision making and influence their own path of development increase the socio-economical conditions. The study identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the OTOP project and systematically follow these variables into slum settings. Based on theoretical framework of participatory development and empowerment, the study discusses local contexts and Thai cultural characteristics followed by modifications of the original ideas from OTOP into a so called One Slum One Product (OSOP) project.

Keywords: OTOP, participation, empowerment, slum, Klong Toey, Thailand
Sammanfattning

Urbanisering föder urban fattigdom. Hälften av världens befolkning är stadsbor och antalet ökar. Lösningar på utmaningarna kan komma från nya idéer likaväl som tidigare verktyg. Denna studie undersöker möjligheterna att tillämpa ett landsbygdsutvecklingsprogram, One Tambon One Product (OTOP), till en slumutvecklingsstrategi. Genom att välja Klong Toey-slumen i centrala Bangkok, Thailand, har studien kontextualiseras de demografiska karaktäristikerna, värderingar och verkligheter till en teoretiskt applicerad studie.

Studiens tyngdpunkt är att öka förståelsen av en så kallas bottom-up inställning av socioekonomisk utveckling. Genom att formalisera de informella yrkena och belysa alternativa inkomstkällor för sluminvånare samt att integrera dem i det demokratiska beslutsfattandet ökar man socioekonomiska villkor. Studien identifierar OTOP:s styrkor och svagheter och följer systematiskt dessa variabler i slummiljö. Utifrån de teoretiska ramverken för deltagande utveckling och empowerment diskuterar studien den lokala kontexten, thailändska kulturella drag och modifieringen av OTOP idén till en så kallad One Slum One Product (OSOP) projekt.

Nyckelord: OTOP, deltagande, empowerment, slum, Klong Toey, Thailand
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>The Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community Development Department</td>
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<td>CODI</td>
<td>Community Organization Development Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>IGO</td>
<td>Intergovernmental organizations</td>
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<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>OSOP</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1 Dynamic urban-rural relationship

The flow and interdependence between the rural and urban is widely recognized and even though they both act within different circumstances and prospects they also nourish each other. The interconnected dynamics are expressed in a variation of economical, political, cultural and social elements that are highly prioritized in the global development paradigm of an increased quality of livelihood. Urbanization is not a new phenomenon but we have never witnessed such fast expanding rates and it can not only be associated with improvements and possibilities, it must also be a synonym for poverty, exclusion and unhealthy environments. The World is in a constantly changing and the transition from rural to urban lifestyle brings about a great challenge. To embrace and approach the difficulties in realistic manners is a step closer to the solutions.

**Figure 1**

*Annual Increment of the World Population and the World Urban Population 1950 - 2030*

The rural-urban partnership is unavoidable; the socio-economical patterns have become more complex in its transfer. As Takashi Tomosugi has noted the prosperity of cities like Bangkok could not have been at their current state without the rural support. The force of this relationship has also created the establishment of slums, which origins in the industrialization era in Europe during the 1800th century. Since then the slums have spread and expanded and slum dwellers often act within the informal sector where the daily life is surrounded by uncertainties. Slums have developed to become the indicator of the urban poor and the fast and enormous volume of rural-urban migration have created a so called “over urbanization”, where the rural sites experience brain drain while urban areas become overcrowded. Former recognitions that the countryside experienced higher statistics of poverty while urban dwellers had it better off is now facing a change where the rapid urbanization have lead to “urbanization of poverty”.

The embracement of socio-economical importance of empowering slum dwellers to access the urban sphere as legitimate citizens rather than a marginalized group surrounded by uncertainties of livelihood is the overall discussion in this study. The presentation of a multidimensional understanding of the rural-urban relationship is of high value and the understanding of the contexts, aims and implementations acts as the leading direction throughout the study. This study will investigate how a negative urban development can be reversed into a more durable direction – by using already existing tools.

### 1.1.1 In the case of Thailand

Asia is the home of 80 percents of the Worlds citizens and today has a rate of 36 % urbanized population. With mega-cities like Calcutta, Shanghai, Seoul, Tokyo and Bangkok where the official number of residents reaches above 10 million inhabitants, not including the non-registered inhabitants, the concerns of a sustainable urban development are more than legitimate. Country members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) witness the fastest pace of urbanization in the Asian region, where the influx rate from rural to urban rose to 45 percents in 2006.
Throughout history cities have been seen as the hub of innovations, creativity, development and social, economical and political centralization. But what should also be acknowledged and reflected upon is the mutual dependence and benefits between rural and urban areas. Marginalized groups in the society often act both within the informal sector as well as with multi-functional jobs⁶; being flexible is a must when the livelihood is constantly limited. Creating several sources of modest income becomes a safety-net and the buffer zone for monthly expenditures becomes less elastic. UN-Habitat explains that instead of identifying the informal sector as a problem, the sector should be viewed as a tool of solutions⁷.

Slum dwellers in Thailand, working in these informal occupations, like street vendors, establish a complex micro economical formation. To apprehend the values, knowledge and possibilities could increase the wellness of the neglected; to create a sustainable economy based upon the given circumstances, habits and attitudes. Thailand doesn’t differ from other cases; many citizens are to be found in the informal occupations and are frequently be categorized as workers of low-social status. It should be pointed out that the slum environments in Thailand are described as lively, socially flourishing and with a strong community cohesiveness which is just the opposite of passiveness. Some may regard the slums as a fringe for storing a population surplus with the transition groups that left the rural narrow prospects for the urban dream. Perhaps the general apprehension of the slums rather should be seen as vivid areas that may accomplish great things with the right tools and the possibilities for opportunities. But like other industrialized cities, the economical forces and gaining of land is more valued then the commodity of houses or shacks, which puts the slum dwellers in a constant fear of being evicted. Underprivileged groups and individuals have shown the strengths of flexibility and adaptation; because there is not much choice left.

⁶ UNESCAP 2007: 235
⁷ Cabane 2008: 204
1.3 **Problem formulations**

- What are the possibilities and difficulties with an implementation of the rural development program OTOP into a slum, more precisely the Bangkok slum Klong Toey?
- What kind of progress can be achieved and what type of empowerment may be the most suitable considering Klong Toey’s characteristics?

1.4 **Purpose**

Supply and demand are keywords in economical terms. Demands for social improvements are my personal motivation, which has resulted in the chosen topic of study. The down to basic purpose of this study is to investigate the feasibilities of applying a rural development program to a slum development strategy on a socio-economical level. To do so in the most valid way, it will be analyzed upon the circumstances of a chosen slum, more precisely the Bangkok slum Klong Toey. Using a Bangkok slum is a given choice considering the fact that the five provinces surrounding Bangkok, including the city itself, is the home of more slum dwellers then the remaining 70 provinces in the country all together.\(^8\)

Since the focus will mainly aim towards the strengths and weaknesses of the rural development program One Tambon\(^9\) One Product (OTOP) and the possibilities of the slum characteristics to apply such a program, the research for the socio-economical benefits will require examination of the demographic conditions as well as the specific requirements based on environmental, social, cultural and economical circumstances. The focal point is the social and economical transitions of the OTOP program implementations, theoretically, on the Klong Toey slum. The variables of empowerment, education, participation and job-security will follow the study throughout. The line of argument will focus on the investments in human capital; the slum dwellers must be seen as an essential asset for the society and not disregarded as outsiders.

As a Development and International Co-operation student I emphasize changes towards improvements for human conditions. With this study I will examine the field of social strengthening, economical legitimacy and the need to discuss the issues of developing human capital based on the local knowledge and know-how’s.

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\(^8\) Pornchockchai 2003: 8

\(^9\) Tambon stands for Village in Thai. OTOP: One Village One Product
1.4.1 Delimitations

Studies in the field of both rural and urban areas have been well-documented. Arising issues keep on creating a demand for both scholars and the public and private sector to supply solutions and research. Delimitations are needed for a study to concretize itself and increase the validity, this study is not an exception.

Even though the infrastructural questions as well as the need for access to necessities are of high importance, theses issues will not be discuss directly. The main focus is the improvement of creating job-opportunities, empowerment, education and participation. This study will look into the slum dwellers day to day life that live in Bangkok. With that said it will not include people who move between cities for work, mostly in construction work, and who often live in even worse and neglected conditions. These people can be regarded as a separate group within the slums and this group can’t be included due to the circumstances of the study that requires enacted inhabitants. Even though the time circumstances will not allow me to bring more variables, issues and discussion to the study, I have not been aiming to view time as a limitation of quality but more as a delimitation of the extension of covered topics.
2. GRASPING THAILAND

2.1 “Chat, Satsana, Phramahakasat”

The trinity of Thailand is *Chat, Satsana, Phramahakasat*. Chat stands for Nation, followed by Satsana which is the meaning of religion and Phramahakasat, which symbolizes the King and the Monarchy. Three topics that are formulated by the Thai people to define themselves; the importance of the symbols and the strengths of the nation. While visiting Thailand it is unavoidable to reflect upon significance of the King Bhumibol Adulyadej and the religion, mostly Buddhism but with a stronger minority of Islam in the southern parts of the country. Loyalty towards the family is regarded as a great responsibility and the feeling of offering help to each other becomes a red line throughout society. Even though Thailand is among other rapidly developing countries have remained flexible to arising challenges. Its reality has affected the modern and traditional balances that still keep an advantage for the cultural characteristics and a proud nationalism. Industries such as tourism and

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Wongtada, Virakul and Singhapakdi 2005: 613
manufacturing are blooming and with the successful marketing of branding Thailand as the “Land of Smiles”, the establishment had raised the awareness of the country’s existence.

Thailand is situated in Southeast Asia and is neighbouring Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia and also stands the interesting position of never being colonized\(^\text{11}\). Thailand was formerly known as Siam and was in the ancient times a large Kingdom, which often came in conflicts with both Cambodia and Burma. Today, Bangkok holds the largest airport in the region and is a hub for business, culture, events, trade and tourism. Thailand is the fourth largest country, counting population, in Southeast Asia and the diversity of the Thai people is seen in the various dialects, regional characteristics and general occupations. Similar to other Asian countries the fear of open confrontations or arguments characterizes the Thai people to avoid conflicts and embrace compromises.\(^\text{12}\)

Buddhism is an active variable that teaches the “middle way”, which affects the loose hierarchy, meaning that even though hierarchy exists in different forms in family, work or government also acts in a respected way towards each other which is a part of the belief in karma. Thailand is often presented as a loose vertical hierarchal society, something that brings many contradictions in the society. This is especially notable in the religion which is not always strictly following the laws of Buddha but has been formed to become a so called “Thai-style Buddhism” with influences of animism.\(^\text{13}\) Many markets in the rural areas are commonly located in the temple area, a place that is normally regarded as the gathering point in the villages, and while living in Thailand you may noted that the people are well-organized even though it may not always been visible. In Martin J. Gannons book Understanding global cultures: metaphorical journeys through 28 nations, clusters of nations, and continents, Thailand is described as “loose authority, ranking, freedom and equality and the Thai smile”\(^\text{14}\) which is reflected in the values, behaviour and attitudes towards themselves and each other. Having observed of Thai culture it is clear that the ideas of Sanook\(^\text{15}\) and Mai Pen Rai\(^\text{16}\) is well implemented in the lifestyle of an ordinary Thai person is conducted; which is to create an atmosphere of pleasure and not facing problems before seeing the solutions.

\(^{11}\) Kislenko 2004: xvi

\(^{12}\) Wongtada, Virakul and Singhapakdi 2005: 613

\(^{13}\) Gannon 2004: 8

\(^{14}\) Ibid.,: 28

\(^{15}\) Sanook means Fun in Thai

\(^{16}\) Mai pen rai mean No problem/No worries in Thai


2.1.1 Politics in a constant edge

When the armoured cars rolled in to Bangkok in September 2006 the political scene was once again in swing. Since the polity of a total monarchy, which was ruled with authoritarian absolutism\(^{17}\), was replaced with a military rule in 1932, Thailand has experienced, counting until the written moment even though there are currently tensions in Bangkok, 18 *coup d’états*. Dividing the past 88 years, since the start until the year of 2010, it is roughly a *coup d’état* every 5 years. The recognized organization Freedom House, which reports about the democratization level and the expansion of freedom around the World, argues that Thailand is a “partly free” state. Meaning that the rating has improved since 2008 when the country switched from being a military regime to being ruled by a political party, which was the case from the coup in 2006 to the elections in 2008. Since 2006 the government has been replaced by its ruling party on several occasions and mobs have been frequently present all over the country.\(^{18}\) The stabilization and effectiveness of institutionalism is also experiencing a backlash.

The military often see themselves as the protector of the political scene and they are actively in interrupting with coups if they see acts of power abuse, mismanagement or unhealthy behaviour for Thailand’s well-being. As a result, Thailand’s political scene has been surrounded by uncertainties and a distant power sharing between perpetrators and the law abiding citizens of Thailand. The discussion concerning Asian values and democratization raise the question whether Western democratic rules really are applicable in Asia; Thai scholars have often claimed it’s in appropriation\(^{19}\).

The monarchy have always had a high position in Thailand and even though the King doesn’t have official political power it is well-known that the silent power from the Palace have always affected how the country have been ruled. In recent years the image of Thailand has not only been beaches and smiles, but also occupation of the airport, bloody conflicts in three provinces in the south between Muslims and Buddhists and now the occupation of the known “Red Shirts” groups, which support the ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. In the 1930’s until 1950’s there existed a political will to open up the political scene and transform it to a more transparent and reachable sphere for the population to involve with, to diminish the authoritarian atmosphere and develop the democratic foundations of the country. Today the issue is no longer about how the make the citizens more interactive but rather the complications of how to mediate the threats of political disturbance; both amongst the politicians as well as the civilians.

\(^{17}\) Ockey 2004: 1

\(^{18}\) Freedom House 2009

\(^{19}\) Ockey 2004: 2
2.1.2 Economical bloom

Pressure is a fact for all countries that are in the race for the modernization process, its phantom is diverse and the integration of incoming new realities affects all the layers of the society. To achieve economical bloom also requires the effort of input. As the world’s largest producer of rice and a well-known tourist destination the economical development forecast is positive. The society of Thailand still has a journey of economical impacts embark upon which will result in social transitions, environmental challenges, political establishments and external impacts. With the introduction of policy conducted with tax-relieves, subsidized loans, export orientation, foreign investment friendly terms and development banks, Thailand had from the middle of the 1980’s until the Asian crisis in 1997 a national growth between 8 to 12 percents, making Thailand one of the most rapidly growing economies in the World.\(^{20}\) Since 1960 the economy has expanded 15 fold and is today focusing on decreasing the unemployment, which has resulted in politics focusing on social reforms with social welfare, education, health and labour. The experiences from the Asian crisis made the governmental policy to work towards increased investments in social capital, to avoid the impact of crisis on the already vulnerable target groups. This was achieved through efficiency in the public sector and restructuring social infrastructures to increase the competiveness of the Thai society in the global market.\(^{21}\)

Before and after the Asian crisis, Thailand has been an attractive market for foreign investments, mainly coming from East Asia. The social upgrade reflection on the economical development has been shown to a certain degree in the reduction of child malnutrition and access to safe water. In other areas criticism can be directed to e.g. to the centralization of investments towards urban areas, especially in Bangkok, and weak poverty reduction in the countryside\(^{22}\). The policy guidelines set for the education, labour, social and health issues strive to provide protection for poor. By support training in the private sector, assistant to expand social security benefits, promote participation in the private sector and education, improve the quality of education, prioritize health for children and improve efficiency in the rural health care.\(^{23}\) But like all nations across the world, the issues of formulating and implementing are separate approaches to action. The economical sphere is threatened by corruption, nepotism, lack of transparency and mismanagements, which undermine the value of participation of different stakeholders and the outcomes of good governance.

\(^{20}\) Wongtada, Virakul and Singhapakdi 2005: 614

\(^{21}\) Pongsapich 2002: 231

\(^{22}\) Ibid.,: 119

\(^{23}\) Ibid.,: 232
3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Contributing literature

The 19th century 2 percents of the World’s population was urban citizens. In the middle of the 1900th century the number rose to 30 percents and today half of the World’s population consists of people living in city environments. The urban growth of the Earth has increased faster than the notorious Club of Rome24 predicted in 1972 with their Malthusian theory of urbanization. The urbanization level in developed countries is predicted to stabilize while developing countries will experience a rapid increase from 1.9 billion people in the year 2000 to 3.9 billion in 203025. The challenges of urbanization are diverse and some of the stakeholders might carry a hidden agenda of personal profits. As the cities will nourish a great deal of the coming generations and the children will be born into the reality of cities, the issues addressing sustainable urban development are increasingly documented.

Mike Davis’ book Planet of Slum is a comprehensive approach to explain, in an easy-going, critical and informative way, the growing number of slums around the World. The combination of statistics and narrative writing making it possible for the reader to grasp important issues of globalization and while doing so Davies isn’t trying to describe the slum dwellers as the victims but rather to create a base of understanding the origin and effects of increasing slum areas. The bias upon the poor as a deedless group is changing and the embracement of the effort done by the poor on a daily basis must become an important view within the development studies. The Challenge of Slums, released by UN-Habitat, and included over 100 scholars that co-operated to write the report which was published in 2003. Focusing on urban poverty, including case studies, and by using comparative databases as well as collaborations with universities the acknowledgement, in a perhaps a bit bureaucratic but powerful way, sends out the message about the expansion of slums worldwide.

Urbanization was for a long time regarded as a consequence of economical growth and associated within the same fields of study,26 this has however changed into more manifold area of research. What is recognized as key characteristics in urban poverty is described as poor quality of housing, social fragmentations, exposure of violence and crime, environmental hazards and lack of basic infrastructures.27 2002 UN-Habitat defined five characteristics for what defines a slum as inadequate

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24 Club of Rome is a global think-thank that engage in international political issues, famous for its publication Limit of Growth where a new-Malthusian is preached

25 UN-Habitat 2001

26 Beall and Fox 2009: 19

27 Ibid.,: 114
access to safe water, insecure residential status; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructures, poor structural quality of housing and overcrowding. This definition of slums is a comprehensive description, but it is mainly focusing on infrastructural and judicial key-issues, but lacks the ingoing social dimensions. What is also important to recognize is that the UN Millennium Project goal number 7, target 11 sets out to “achieve by year 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.” Keeping in mind that the previously presented deprivations of a slum vary from area to area, country to country, this will be presented in the conducted study.

The paradigm of development studies is never static and influences from current trends have set an agenda within work conducted towards poverty reduction. For example Dr. Muhammed Yunus and the micro-credits that have been spread to many organizations as a form of development. These micro-credits are becoming a frequently both in rural and urban areas and targeting poverty through self-help and economical activity. Understanding the micro-credits also involves the comprehension of the informal sector, which composes a labour market category. Saskia Sassen explains the informal economy distinctive influences from highly capitalized, specialized services countries in her report Informalization in Advanced Market Economies for the ILO. Sassen discusses the informal sector lacks the labour unions, regulations, marginalization and lower payment. The inequalities of the informal market can perhaps not be extinguished. Like Adam Smith’s “Invisible hand” the market will always find a path to base upon, but this doesn’t claim the need to lose interest in integrating informal occupations with new formal levels.

3.2 Previous development in Thailand

The current development paradigm in Thailand is described by the United Nations as a “leap frog” that is heading for full development and collaboration with previous donor countries and becoming a donor country itself. Since the Asian crisis in 1997 which increased the difficulties in the country, is now phased out and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) closed it office in Thailand 2003. Focusing on bilateral agreements as well as acting in international co-operations has given Thailand and is the only

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28 UN-Habitat 2008: 2
29 Millennium project 2006
30 Dr Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize 2006 with his micro-credit bank Grameen Bank which stimulate entrepreneurship, self-reliance and poverty reduction
31 Sassen 1997: 1
32 Ibid.,: 5
non-OECD country that has reached the number 8 Millennium Goal concerning global partnership.\textsuperscript{33} The Asian crisis also promoted the embrace of the so called “sufficient economy” which discusses in which to approach the economics in the globalized era which is currently evolving and to create more durable economical elasticity\textsuperscript{34}. Quoting the King Bhumibol Adulyadej: “To be a tiger is not that important, the most important thing is that we have sufficiently enough to meet our own needs, and sufficient economics means a sufficiency for self-supporting”\textsuperscript{35}. The sufficiency approach is well-discussed in the \textit{Thailand Human Development Report 2007} which also recognizes the importance of strengthening the communities to achieve implementable and sustainable solutions to self-reliance and co-operating with the external forces.\textsuperscript{36} The issue of participation is also argued to have increased during recent years due to decentralization and political awareness as an outcome of the political instability.\textsuperscript{37}

Up until 1996 the poverty had been decreasing in Thailand but with the backlash of the Asian crisis in 1997 poverty has increased. In 1998 approximately 23 percents in municipal areas and 77 percents in non-municipal locations were unemployed. Due to the crisis the urban population declined 1.2 million habitants which returned back to the rural sites. With urban areas standing for 85 percents\textsuperscript{38} of the economical output this have an impact on how the internal dynamics are cooperating. During the ousted Prime Ministers Thaksin Shinawatra’s lead, the focus on economy found many resources in the rural areas, both through rural funds, OTOP and subsiding petrol and transportation to ease for the rural population\textsuperscript{39}. This political and economical conduct has been claimed to be populist by some but has still won the interest of outside the World to find solutions in how Thailand created a model for development. Anyone interested in how Shinawatra’s political and economical policies were implemented is recommended to read Pasuk and Baker’s book \textit{Thaksin: the business of politics in Thailand}.

20 percents of Thailand’s population lives in urban areas, 3 percents of the population lives in slums. The overall urban population has an 89 percents access to safe water sources, 98 percents improved sanitation and 92 percents of the urban citizens live in durable housing.\textsuperscript{40} This provides an indicator of the circumstances for the urban settlement but the reality remains that these 3 percents of slum

\textsuperscript{33} United Nations Thailand 2008
\textsuperscript{34} Kongkraew 2003
\textsuperscript{35} Puntasen 2000: 64
\textsuperscript{36} UNDP 2007: vii
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.; 5
\textsuperscript{38} Thadaniti sine anno: 3
\textsuperscript{39} Hoontrakul 2008: 6
\textsuperscript{40} UN-Habitat 2001
habitants creates a number of almost 2 million people, 62 percents of these are concentrated in Bangkok. During the 1960’s the government started to invest more effort and assistance in the slums, mainly by establishing the Community Improvement Office, which was under the control of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Today the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI) is mainly responsible for coordination and support of development in community organizations and by bilateral agreements CODI has cooperated with several NGO’s, other public departments and IGO’s. Some of the conducted work has been focusing on micro credits for housing and subsidizing infrastructural costs. The challenges that CODI has experienced when working with slum upgrades are the variation of occupation, incomes, micro politics and sociological patterns in the communities. One of the positive progresses is statistics that show a growing female participation in local politics, between 21-33 percent, in the slums of Bangkok. Even though democratic implementation has been labile, the rise of the idea of democratization with start in 1932 has changed a fundamental attitude among the slum dwellers of the value of participation and equality. Protesting is a sign of assuming that equality should be shared as a basic right.

CODI have been mainly working towards problems concerning housing and supported the extensions of its action by establishing community networks, economical support and expanding welfare. Today there are projects in Bangkok that create urban environmental friendly gardens to promote community participation, adding job opportunities and reducing poverty. These projects have also aimed to strengthen the bonds between locals and the government and see potential in community gardening and increased self-sufficiency in food production. One of the most recognized organizations that are active in the slums is the Duang Prateep Foundation, founded by a former Klong Toey resident. The foundation focuses on community development through establishing kindergartens, educates slum dwellers and support with scholarships and has an AIDS project in the slum. The result of the Duang Prateep Foundation derives from the problems in the slum and its office in placed in the slum itself.
4. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

4.1 Theoretical approach

Since the early 1990’s the development paradigm has been promoting self-help, empowerment and capacity building.\(^{49}\) The chosen theories have also been selected with the motivation to be adaptable in rural and urban settings; therefore this study is exploring possibilities of strengthening the well-being of a slum through socio-economical empowerment.

Theory is often an argument to be used as a simplifier of the reality and to understand the circumstances that people of concern act within, the environment that must be evaluated and the pre-conditions of applying one kind of strategy to become another approach of development. The choice of theory, empowerment and participation, derives from the fundamental outcomes and aims of the OTOP projects. By creating income opportunities in the rural sites it has enabled its population to engage in collaboration, to believe in their ideas, to find source from old techniques and develop a both their communities as well as themselves.

The keywords in this study are socio-economical development through empowerment in slum areas. Regarding this fact it is unavoidable to not include a participatory perspective into the study. Participatory development has shifted its dynamics since it emerged in the 1970’s\(^ {50}\) and today holds a more recognized role within the development studies and work. Both the participatory development and empowerment theories will be supplemented with a discussion within a Thai context.

4.2 Participatory development

Throughout different development approaches there have been trends within the scholar sphere how issues of improvements should be conducted. The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) can be used as an example where the belief in the neo-liberalistic approaches was the solution of budget deficits. It was to be solved by liberalizing the markets, enhancing the private sector and decrease the public sector that relied on the rule of the power of the invisible hand. The base derived from the top-down idea of development theories. Since SAP had a strong hold in the late 1980’s\(^ {51}\) it have been widely criticized, mainly to worsen the poverty instead of reducing it like its vision was argued and especially for the rural inhabitants and females who are already deprived target groups. Today the development

\(^{49}\) Kersting 2003: 214

\(^{50}\) Singh 2001: 175

\(^{51}\) IMF 1999
trends are instead focusing on a so-called bottom-up approach; where the locals have more to say for their own path of development. The participatory frame challenges the idea of how aid should be delivered and the expectations from the receiver and the giver and according to the World Bank projects that have included the participatory objectives have shown a 15 percents higher expenditure compared to those who conducted a top-down based projects\textsuperscript{52}.

The World Banks \textit{Urban Policy and Economical Development: An Agenda for the 1990’s} reformulated the public sector as an “enable-ler” for the market that a healthy urban political approach was to aim for eliminating obstacles for productivity amongst the urban economical agents\textsuperscript{53}. One of these models are a part of the participatory development approach, which represents in many ways the basic idea of OTOP that strives to build a stable base for the rural locals to support their own economy on a local know how. Participatory development can be viewed upon from different ankles such as macro and micro level; from high political decision making to design development projects in local communities. One popular form of participatory development have been to composed participatory theatres which aim is to in a pedagogical and easily accessible and understandable ways approach the target groups with theatre performances about taboo belayed issues such as HIV/Aids. By involving the audience try to de-dramatize the taboo and hold an open discussion. Creating participatory platforms can be creative, non-normative frameworks and in the search for innovative solutions.

The relationship between locals and other stakeholders must be balanced and communicative. The fundamental approach must be going two-ways and only leaning towards researcher’s evaluations cannot be seen as the ultimate solution and the process of communication must be enlighten by empowering both the stakeholders and the locals to meet each other with the mutual understanding of each other’s values and knowledge. The challenges that comes along with implementing such an attitude towards development is not only an issue of apprehending the own role, it also is time-consuming, require capital, a source of structure and assistance. The lack of support, bad management or insufficient commitment may come with fatal consequences such as downfall of trust.\textsuperscript{54} The participatory development approach is also called as a self-help direction of development and it should be sympathized that large, established organizations have undertaken such a strategy in several projects. The issue of knowledge management is also a part of the overall picture concerning the need of keying existing knows-hows, earlier mistakes that can be avoided and challenges on the location. Knowledge can be tacit and/or explicit – but it still can’t be neglected. Participatory methods faces questions of how to integrate the people into projects which makes illiteracy an issue or the distrust towards institutional trust which are seen in rooted structural problems like strong internal hierarchy.

\textsuperscript{52} Jennings 2000: 3

\textsuperscript{53} Davies 2006: 185

\textsuperscript{54} van Heck 2003: 2
The paradigm shift that the participatory development is representing is fascinated to the degree that the stakeholders, who come from different background, come to the acknowledgement of the values of traditional resources in interaction of other useful tools. This way of power sharing empowers the locals to both develop their communities as well as previous instruments of living hood; to believe in their capacity and realize innovations.

4.2.1 Participatory development in the Thai context

Thailand is included in the so called Asian collectivistic society where the cultural attributes often sources from Confucianism, but the deeply rooted Buddhist philosophy is reflected upon the hierarchy in a paradox way. Using Buddhism as one of the variables to understand the Thai society can indicate the use of participatory development as a way of integrating people’s power within the society. The Power Distance Index (PDI) by Geert and Hofstede finds that Thailand is remarkable in the Asian discourse and since the group belonging is an cultural characteristic in Thailand it can also be argued to act as an strengthen wind of motivation; to mobilize for the wellness of the group. One of the strengths provided by the participatory development approach in semi-democratic societies is the empowering stage of promoting and embracing good governance\(^{55}\), which is vital in transitional societies such as Thailand. By not only paying attention to the establishment of the democratic institution the insights of implementing democratic attitudes and political participation must also be important while undertaking democratization.

The cultural and social features within the Thai culture can affect how the participatory development may act in the given circumstances. A possible scenario is the advantage that can be drawn from the the collectivistic society which have an long historical establishment in the society; people know how to gather up and organize themselves and may be more dependent on each other. As Buddhism teaches the balance life and the middle way it also characterizes collective calm in the society. While the political turmoil is constant the monarchy has a vital and important role in all Thai people’s lives and as a symbol of the intermediate sufficiency.

The need of access to information and tools are vital and a strong and active government would ease an establishment of good governance on local level; the Thai political challenge impregnates many levels of the decision making in the country. At a local level the integration can concretize a plan of action by applying strategies to develop human capital and create a spill over to other area of implementation. A dialogue that derives from both locals and other stakeholders strengthens the

\(^{55}\) United Nations 2006
collaboration and it is important to understand that communication and action is not an easy forum of discussion. It is a tool of understanding that is time-consuming and must satisfy a variation of actors.\textsuperscript{56}

4.3 Empowerment theory

What does it mean to be empowered? It is varied and means to give power, authority, strength, enable and develop self-confidence. It can be an ethical, gender, class or anything in-between and more relating to empowerment. Empowerment is working in both micro and macro levels; individual empowerment, community empowerment. Most studies in empowerment focus on the physiological empowerment which values behaviour, attitudes, critical thinking and participation in politics or collective settings.\textsuperscript{57} But empowerment can also be physical, infrastructural or physiological upgrade which enables the power tool to become more accessible. Neither of these is not self-explicit. It is a process. The process contains gaining power as an individual or a group, getting access to resources and control. The potency of empowerment is that it becomes a source of reaching to capacities which often may be hidden behind social rules and norms, subordinations or lack of self-confidence and poor access of necessary tools. Becoming empowered doesn’t mean disempowering somebody else, it is rather and situation of strengthening and enabling.

Empowerment theory can be covered within a landscape of fields such as gender studies, resource management or ethical. Empowerment influences personal as well as group factors and includes circumstances of environment and can have different direction of framework like capacity building, institutionalizing, adaptation and collaborative planning. The theory grew strong in the US during the 1960’s and the Social Activist movement, which argued for the value and force of acting collectively.\textsuperscript{58} The difficulties that have been expressed with the empowerment approach are that a person being engaged in activities preaching of empowerment must be aware and agreed upon the circumstances of the problems and issues. This is however not always the case. In the 1970’s the empowerment strategy became more institutionalized and seen as a tool to empower the passive citizen. In some ways empowerment can be seen as a constructivist thought where the idea of constructing the perception of one-self affect the idea of the World constructed. Being aware of the construction also enables to stand critical towards it. Including socio-economical inequalities and their structures in historical, ethничal, gender and class perspective provides a first glint on how problems can be approached. Participation, direct or indirect, becomes the following step by involving, and

\textsuperscript{56} Bessette 2004: 15
\textsuperscript{57} WHO Regional Office for Europe 2006: 18
\textsuperscript{58} Askheim and Starrin 2007: 11
identifying groups into areas that have previously been inaccessible. Approaching empowerment is a multilateral implementation and must be seen as an infinite source of toolkit.

The power-relation have an influence on how oneself perceives the understanding of its position, class or value. The power-relation defines in many ways how people interact and the superior and subordinate stand of position. Measuring empowerment is also to deepen the understanding of the power relationship. Its impact, extend and consequences. To measure empowerment it must be clear from the beginning what the aim of the empowerment is heading for, without the perspectives the objectives of a project or study can’t find the range of it. Max Weber defines power as probability, acting in a social relationship and achievement of a will or desire and by obtaining the wanted desire without a cost is not, according to Weber, an achievement of goal. These goals can be social, political, moral, physical, economical and informational and is something to keep in mind while evaluating the power share, relationship and structural barriers. Both the participatory development and empowerment theory preaches that context plays a great role in how the theories are used and expanded, especially considering the bottom-up approach which they represent. The World Health Organization (WHO) claims that the most sustainable empowerment is the one that promote political participation which ensure autonomy in decision-making, local bonding and the psychological empowerment. To reduce the dependency is also a way of decreasing the effect of the power-relationship between different individuals, stakeholders, politics and citizens. Conducting projects that aims to strengthen the micro and/or macro levels of empowerment must considerate the cultural and local sensitive’s that are important in how to approach, form and conduct the work.

4.3.1 Empowerment with Thai characteristics

Charles Landry explains in the book *The Creative City: a toolkit for Urban Innovators* that empowering individual requires a learning process by experimenting, learning and provides a creative and innovative supporting framework. Thailand is a hierarchical society with paradox influences of open structures, Asian values have their influences while also being described as loosely hierarchical it can also be assumed there is space to implement more open structures. Developing citizen-responsive environments nourish good governance and by embracing collective actions, co-learning and
consultations from locals\textsuperscript{64} it can move towards a more sustainable process of gathering people and evaluating local needs and supplies. Empowerment as well as participation isn’t a simple or easy procedure. As WHO explains the conclusions of empowerment is most likely to be successful if integrating with macro-level of economics and policies, by welcoming actors of great influence it also obtains source of impact\textsuperscript{65}. But regarding the Thai political scene it must be stated that the flukes of the democratization process aggravates the sustainability in government led projects; directors change positions and the main focus becomes bumpy in the road of implementation. The sufficient economy approach that Thailand undertook after the Asian crisis is emphasizing the mental state of decision making as more durable, sustainable and empowering.\textsuperscript{66} In Thai context the empowerment has been related mostly to community development, which derives from the collectivistic comprehensions. The society, as a unit, stands above the individual which distinguish Asian characteristics from Western.

Empowerment includes structures and processes to enhance; empowerment contributes to the feeling of control and impact and is often shared among members. This is where religion comes as a significant attribute, through common goals, believes and joint norms the groups strengthen and the individual is possible to find a role and position which suits in the collective ideology. Buddhism share commonalities with the community psychology\textsuperscript{67} and the collaboration could find a office in the temples and gathering point; just like it have been done throughout history and still today.

Highlighting the values of participation and empowerment as tools of slum upgrade and transition from rural settings to urban realities, is equal to the consensus of concerning that development should lead to self-reliance and not dependency. To stimulate inclusiveness and productive engines encourages participation and sustainability. The urban poverty address issues of criminality, threat of eviction, lack of regular income, marginalization and social exclusion and these are issues of both social and economical range. Including people and making them more legitimate increases the outcomes of good governance which is representing accountability, transparency, efficiency and responsiveness. It is also claimed that empowerment can be a controversial issue especially while including a power perspective. Within the frame of empowerment it can be defined as a power shift between the stakeholders and the fear of losing power can also lead to unethical and unfair cooperation’s. In some circumstances this is valid but observing the empowerment procedure in a Bangkok slum would rather be an issue of involving all parties to gain wider perspectives and new channels of interest, the socio-economical dimension increases their strengths to contribute to a wider development.

\textsuperscript{64} Landry 2008: 187

\textsuperscript{65} WHO Regional Office for Europe 2006: 14

\textsuperscript{66} UNDP 2007: 35

\textsuperscript{67} Dockett, 2002: 191
5. Methodological framework

5.1 Choice of study and personal background

The choice of study derives from 4 years of intense interest in Asian studies, especially in the Southeast Asian region. First personal experience began in 2006 while participating in a youth exchange between Sweden and Thailand. The engagement has followed with being a volunteer in a child centre in Thailand, working for the Centre for International Youth Exchanges and lecturing about intercultural understanding between Swedish and Thai youngsters. Since the youth exchange 3 months annually have been spent in a Thai family; experiencing, observing and living Thai style in the rural parts of southern Thailand. This is a base of pre-understanding Thai customs and traditions, mentality and values which are analyzed throughout the study.

In 2006, while living in Chon Buri province, my host mother was involved in producing OTOP in the village of Nawanghin. Seeing the network that was established for the common production was intriguing. Through a theoretical analysis examine the possibilities, threats, opportunities and strengths of OTOP and contextualize them into a slum environment with focus on the Klong Toey slum. Previous experience from Thailand and its people have had an impact on the interpretation of creating an, theoretically, urban OSOP. Adopting a hermeneutic position also means that I am aware of the subjective effect as a researcher. But the approach is, with the highest intentions, to deal the material with academic integrity and questioning own interpretations. Presenting the collected information in an understood framework and its interpretation; whoever treats a text analysis comprehends it from different subjective background. Reproducibility and validity are of high value throughout the presentation of the study.

5.1.1 Research process

The selection of material began with researching the available online sources, reading literature and perceiving the scholar world and its extension. This starting process was of quantitative kind which in the research process began to become more qualitative and narrowed. This approach allowed the author to get an overall picture of the study and then define precisely qualified information. A process that has been time consuming but also very giving and developing. This provided the validity of selecting material of value and importance of how socio-economical upgrades can derive from a

68 Teorell and Svensson 2007: 94
bottom-up approach. The contextualized- and collective variables⁶⁹ are a part of a generalization of the demographic reality of the Klong Toey slum. Arguing generalization is, like theory, a simplifier of reality. Disregarding environmental context and cultural characteristics would fail to apply any theory on a chosen area but reflecting on individual level would problematize any outcomes. The choice of material has been strategic based from involved topics and analytic generalized.

Concerning that the study is involving a Thai governmental project has its limitations of accessing both governmental reports as well as Thai language based texts. If the author of this study would be fluent in written Thai it would ease to collect other, Thai based, sources of information. Due to this limitation the study could have been complemented with case studies from rural Thailand and their participants in OTOP or by presenting the reality of a Klong Toey slum dweller more expressively. But it shall be stated that contact with employees from the Community Development Department (CDD) in Thailand have occurred. This through personal contacts and the contact concerned how CDD conducts work in rural sites and OTOP and their points of views of how OTOP have succeeded and its weaknesses.

To write this study the need of investigating fields of Thai culture, urban and rural issues as well as theoretical compositions started of the procedure of collecting the empiric material. The empiric collection comes from previous literature, UN reports and NGO’s. By understanding the basic ideas of OTOP, empowerment and participatory development while pedagogically implement it into slum settings. Combining older literature with more up-to date empiric sources and own observations the desire has been to set out a durable direction of analyzing the causality of using OTOP in urban poor environments. The method is delimited to a theoretical observation of the Klong Toey slum and theoretical framework, the delimitation of writing the study from Stockholm, Sweden has had the impact of using mostly secondary sources. Presenting the outcomes and ideas of One Village One Product (OVOP) and OTOP are from reported results and aims, being time following variables while the OSOP chapter is described from a theoretical analysis which selects the ideas from OTOP and understand these in the chosen context.

Most of the collected data are from either open Internet-based sources or written literature, some are also collected from the database E-brary which requires special log-in accounts. The study is carried out through discussion and the written presentation but aims to ease to the reader by complementing with independent tables and figures. By independent it means that they are self-explanatory and could be understood without supplementary text. The methodological process have included criticism towards the sources, the author have consciously chosen acknowledge sources, especially those that are web-based.

⁶⁹ Esaiasson 2007: 55
5.2 Causality and comprehension

The causal mechanism becomes obvious, since one thing leads to another and from a theoretical perspective; all together it becomes a following procedure. It has been important for the author to provide clear and pedagogical attitude towards the readers. To understand OTOP within rural context and simultaneously analyzing slum environments and the demographic situation of the Klong Toey slum are focal in the study. But it shall also be highlighted that the study is based on theoretical assumptions of causality. The level of analysis are mainly on local level where the implementation is set to act but glances at higher levels of politics and governance. The informal and formal hierarchal structures are identified and neither of these is neglected.

The discourse for the study is built on variables that both explain and affect each other. These variables are both cultural, economical political and social. A so called empirical-holistic approach explains the living conditions and illuminates the importance of understanding the background of what is presented.70

There is no previous research that examines similar implementations in Thailand. Concerning this fact the challenge has been to keep the objectives of the study without including external forces to effect the overall comprehension of the study. While the overall previous research have been wide the specification have been scarce; a challenge of how to outline the study in an understandable way. This was assisted with the help of the supervisor Klas Sandström.

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70 Gunnarsson 2007
6. From “OTOP” to “OSOP”

6.1 Historical insights

One Tambon One Product (OTOP) originates from the Japanese rural development program called One Village One Product (OVOP) and was introduced in 1979 in Oito, Japan and advocated by the former governor of Oito Dr. Morihiko Hiramastu. Its main goal was to encourage a local based economy with a global outlook and is today seen as a popular development movement across Asia where the ideas have been implemented in e.g. China, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand.\(^{71}\) In Indonesia the project is called *Gerakan Kembali ke Desa* meaning Back to Village movement which emerged to prevent rural flee and empowering the communities with their own potential.\(^{72}\) The model approach sets out the framework of locally driven economies in an era of globalization. The motivation to involve the local habitants was to establish an understanding of how the work was to proceed. This by teaching business and economics and establish a firm foundation for the local population to proceed and develop their products on the basis of local know-how and traditions. This was to be done by practical activities such as guidance centres in areas like fisheries, agriculture technology and manufacturing. This first model of OVOP contained the ideas of slogans based on unity and laid out as *One Village, One Dream, One Village, One Song or One Village, One Sport*.\(^{73}\) So the combination of creating practical circumstances of implementation with the interaction of motivation was formed to become a productive way of creating a new rural economy. A way to mobilize the rural people and the schedule to do so was to involve local governments and grass-roots leaders to take initiative of a movement. This by identifying at least one commercial product from each town, marketing and creating a competitive spirit, establishing exhibitions and involving global market. Also by technical support and through vital training and research establishing the project, firstly towards regional and industrial leaders and evolving efficient tools to reach out to the target groups and their distribution.\(^{74}\)

As acknowledged the outline of the OVOP program means to integrate the learning process with the gains of output but what also have been argued by a former Japanese governor is that the OVOP program should not focus on the physical product itself, but that the people behind the production the

\(^{71}\) Igusa sine anno: 25

\(^{72}\) Kuswidiati 2008: 1

\(^{73}\) Igusa sine anno: 27

\(^{74}\) Ibid.: 27-28
human capabilities and to use the OVOP as a tool to provide to capacity of these. What can also be clearly seen in the outline of the original OVOP idea is the base of cooperative collaborations, to integrate stakeholders, provide support and empower the locals. OVOP set out two kinds of products: tangible and intangible products. Meaning that the tangible are material and derives from local specialities while the intangible can be outplayed as festivals or places and the importance of the both is that they have a local rootedness. Like the participatory development theory explains the keywords in the development approach must be to enhance the local circumstances, traditions shall not be neglected and local demands have to be a part of the supply handed. The introduction of the rural development project was mainly to prevent a depopulation of the Oita prefecture. To create a new energy amongst the population, benefit different regions and promote autonomy and eradicate the dependence towards the governmental support.

6.1.1 OTOP applied in Thailand

OVOP promotes participation, stabilization of the growth in a region, empowerment, and improvement of local resources and develop production based from local circumstances, ideas that inspired the Thai government to contact Japan in 2002 which initiated collaboration. The implantation of the OTOP idea is in constant progress, to engine a demand and high quality of the products have brought the importance of exhibition and competiveness. A way to mobilize the villages and visiting an involved community it is clear to identify that a cooperative provide efficiency and mutual dependence. The experience from OTOP is increasing and the tools of marketing, efficiency and

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75 Igusa sine anno: 31
76 OVOP sine anno
capacity are developing but the challenges are equally important in all markets to progress and develop. Following points are how OTOP was implemented, its strengths and weaknesses as well as outcomes and objectives:

**Governmental input**

The aims to empower and improve the rural development involved governmental departments like the CDD to construct a comprehensive database to inform every village in Thailand about the project. To prevent repetitions, create sources of a buy and sell procedure, provide communication tools to promote OTOP products to tourists and create income to village level and establish a platform of communication between different villages to exchange information and share ideas.\(^\text{77}\)

**Participatory perspectives**

The participatory development approach isn’t necessary about increasing productivity of goods but rather improve people’s capacity to produce them. The economy derives from a bottom-up level and with competition and stimulation head for micro-level economics for example export. However with approximately 6744\(^\text{78}\) villages in Thailand the lump sum increase the possibilities of establishing a great market of production; some involve smaller productions while others identify their advantages and use them for benefits and profit.

**Community- and individual empowerment**

OTOP treats the idea of transforming a supplemented activity during spare time or extra income to make it more durable as a stable source of revenue.\(^\text{79}\) Empowering the locals to supply a full capacity, strengthening the self-confidence of an alternative work and teaching the basics of markets, economics and trade to make the producer involved in the selling process. Issues such as quality controls, design, marketing, deadlines and export were important in the project. The social outcomes have been mainly to support entrepreneurship and awareness of quality and competiveness while the economical one has been to make an income on both individual level and as a national source of economics.\(^\text{80}\)

**Challenges**

The difficulties and problems that must be evaluated with the rise of OTOP is over-production, creating variation among the products and avoid neglecting other local products for the benefit of the

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\(^{77}\) OTOP 2003

\(^{78}\) UCLG 2008: 62

\(^{79}\) TAT sine anno

\(^{80}\) ibid.; 20
chosen one. Not all OTOP products have become export quality, therefore the need of exhibitions and competitiveness. The departments working with OTOP must co-operate and integrate different levels of expertise and what the government has done to mobilize an local interest for the OTOP idea is to provide assistance of high scale with e.g. product development, skill training and package design. This co-operation has also brought the challenges of coordinating the large amount of people involved throughout the country. To convince about the OTOP project the government had to work with marketing themselves, meaning that by creating an unity, a pride and a drive amongst the locals it had to present benefits and outcomes even before it set out to operate. The government has given a budget of $ 30-40 million per year \(^81\) and with officers working in every province with the development of OTOP the potential of its growth is still perhaps unrevealed.

**Physical outcomes**

Multi-level based networks, both informal and formal, with governmental support for marketing and coordinating has established collaboration and community mobilization. It also evolved in establishment quality certificates; 1200 products were marked with high standards and ready for export while more than 13,000 products were of regular OTOP product\(^82\). The development of OTOP has also strived to become multifaceted in a variation of industries like within tourism, food, handicrafts and services. A OTOP Ecotourism Village have also been established and OTOP Export and Promotion Centres in Bangkok and Chiang Mai exist and promotes OTOP products\(^83\)

6.2 **OSOP – urban OTOP?**

Arthur Lewis assumed 1955 in *Economical development with unlimited supplies of labour* that the labour force would be constantly nourished by the economical development but since then the economical development haven’t kept pace with the expansion of urban areas and their citizens\(^84\). What is on the other hand stated as a current reality is the fact that most slum dwellers are active in the informal sector. The risks of engaging in this sector are personal health hazards, environmental risks as well as uncertainties and lack of insurances and often cause inferior source of income\(^85\). By including the informal sector to become a more legalized working sphere it also build the opportunity of distinguish capabilities, demand and supply, economical profits and efficiencies that previously

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\(^{81}\) Asian Development Bank: 95

\(^{82}\) OVOP Apec sine anno: 12

\(^{83}\) TAT sine anno

\(^{84}\) OVOP Apec sine anno: 92

\(^{85}\) Ibid.: 115
were marked to an outside zone. Today the importance of innovative thinking, entrepreneurial thoughts and creative solutions are more valid than ever. Using former ideas and modifying them can be parts of solutions and increase the understanding of difficulties then have not yet been named. Analyzing the urban poor is in need of different tools and techniques which are flexible in context, time and space. Contextualizing a theoretical implementation of the original idea of OTOP into a slum strategy of OSOP can be set out consequently, based from the OTOP frame work:

**Governmental input**

The main governmental organ which works with urban issues, especially with the urban poor, is CODI. They have conducted projects with slum upgrade and have already used participation as an important tool of slum upgrade. Using CODI as a frame work carries the advantage of expertise in area and its inhabitants. By starting a learning-process between the departments like CODI and CDD can be a stable base of further stages of implementing OSOP.

**Participatory perspectives**

The long-run investment in participatory development is accumulating greater pay-off than the short-time cost, especially considering the process of establishing a potential market. OSOP will carry the basic ideas of OVOP such as local linkages, human development and self-reliance. By using the already existing local networks and expand their field of action into cooperation’s the basic ideas can involve the slum dwellers into new objectives and goals. The participatory development, as acknowledge, is also a key factor in building good governance and raising democratization and institutionalism.

**Community- and individual empowerment**

UNDP defines empowerment as “the ability of people to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic, and political forces in order to take action to improve their life situation”. Implementing the OSOP would mean a multifaceted work including channels of information, education and training in economics, participation and decision making and strategy building. The empowerment level would be active both in physical and physiological levels.

**Challenges**

Implementing OSOP can’t be claimed to be identical to the rural frame of OTOP, modifications are a must. There are several variables that are important to considerate such as avoiding duplications of products and services, not narrowing the choice of production and embrace a variation of products that

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86 UNDP 2003: xii
still base from local know-how’s. There is a need to be sensitive about the environment settings and understand clearly the differences between rural population and slum dwellers and their different realities.

**Physical outcomes**

Self-employment and low wages are characteristics that address difficulties amongst the urban poor. Instead of letting the urban poor become a neglected group with low influences within the market embrace the available work force into an urban strength. A person that stays in uncertainties tends to also be more flexible and response well to market demands – this is a strong advantage. Implementing the original OVOP, and Thai OTOP, into a slum setting reaches for different objectives in different circumstances. It’s still a socio-economical issue, it is still empowerment strength and it is still addressing sustainable self-reliance but it is not addressing issues such as migration or rural development.

### 6.2.1 Klong Toey - The Canal of Pandan

Imagine the 1950’s. Economical transformations are currently active, transitions from agricultural incomes becomes labour intense markets. The rise of the Klong Toey area is developing and the work force demand is high; the Klong Toey Harbour is rising. 80 percents of those, in that era of time, local residents helped to build the port. Klong Toey, which means the Canal of the Pandan[^87] in Thai, is today surrounded with vital port facilities which connect the largest city in Thailand with their export-orientated economical activities.

The port is situated along the Chao Phraya River and was until the beginning of 1990’s the largest port in Thailand[^88]. The area where the squatter communities grew and expanded, with migrants from mainly from the northeast provinces, was owned by the Port Authority of Thailand and a location which is characterized by its swampy grounds. Klong Toey is a district in the central parts of Bangkok and house the largest slum in the country with 80,000 residents[^89].

*Urbanization* is related to urban growth. *Urbanism* responds to the life conditions within urban areas[^90]; a behavioural reaction to the environment you are acting within. Observing Thai customs the cooperative feature are notable; the cooperative spirit can be traced back to the beginning of the 1900[^91].

[^87]: Pandan is a green plant which grow in the canal and *Klong* is the Thai word for Canal

[^88]: Duang Prateep Foundation 2007

[^89]: Ibid.,

[^90]: Srikam sine anno: 1
From OTOP to OSOP
Empowering the slum through rural development

The rapid urbanization of Bangkok, as a result of trade with foreigners opening up, has led to a large influx of citizens from the countryside. The slum dwellers are a relatively new generation of habitants, originating from the countryside or being born in the city.

Improvements have been made in the slum, but there is no final stage of development and increasing the well-being of the slum dwellers must be seen as an essential part of urban development. Risk factors such as irregular incomes, criminal activities, absence of adults, and environmental threats like waste must be addressed.

Infrastructural issues are of high value, but enhancing social empowerment is equally powerful in a slum upgrade. Empowerment in its true meaning turns to the social strength, independence, and power over one's own life.

6.2.1.1 The reality of a Klong Toey slum dweller

International Labour Organization (ILO) state that 87 percent of the slum dwellers in Bangkok work in the informal sector, marginalized people tend to work with several jobs, and are independent upon each other to provide opportunities for one another. The ILO report *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A statistic picture* defined the informal sector with seven characteristics: a) ease of entry; b) reliance of indigenous resources; c) family ownership of enterprises; d) small scale of operations; e) labour-intensive and adapted technology; f) skills acquired outside the formal school system, and; g) unregulated and competitive markets.

Many families live in so-called *hongtao*, which is a house that is used both for business and living. These hongtao’s merge a micro enterprise chain where both slums and other urban districts often create clusters of lifestyle. Many slum habitants also make their living by working as street vendors, a harsh work that burdens physical well-being. Even though the street vendors work both in the area of living and outskirts the social context is important. As Somsook Boonyabancha, director of CODI, explains the importance of gathering people for joint activities is also a part of the urban soul, its energy and dynamics. By cleaning canals, house-building or gardening the mobilizing force is seen as a common feature in Thai custom. Boonyabancha continues with stating that decentralization of urban governance to grass-root level shouldn’t be seen as a dangerous process but rather a legitimate development since the locals living in slums have shown its capacity of local indirect decision-making. Boonyabancha points on the fact that establishment of activity decreases passivity in areas.

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91 Thuvachote 2007
92 Salter 2010: 3
93 Beall and Fox 2009: 93
94 Srikamsine anno: 6
that are unknown for locals.\textsuperscript{95} Given the fact of the unequal economical distribution in urban areas are wide, 20 percents of the lowest income represents 4.8 percents while the 20 percents of the high-income earner had a hold of 53.9 percents of the total national income\textsuperscript{96}.

Communities have a large effect on its population; they are institutions with common values and untold behaviour structures. In some ways they represent cultural characteristics specific for the area. The people in Klong Toey are a mixture of migrated and born slum dwellers, 60 percents of the residents were born there while remaining percents had migrated into the slums.\textsuperscript{97} This creates a varied population with influences from the country side. Majority of the people in the Klong Toey slum come from the north-eastern\textsuperscript{98} parts of Thailand.

Communities often provide a link between the traditional and cultural features with arising challenges and phenomena’s.\textsuperscript{99} The slums are described as socially active with fairly social structures. They are neither passive nor unaware of the situation and the possibilities for improvements. The informal relationships are used for networking in job opportunities, contact with the local authorities or raise political awareness.\textsuperscript{100}

### 6.3 Pre-conditions for successful OSOP implementation

The pre-conditions for a successful implementation of the OSOP idea carry several issues that must be highlighted. These elements are analyzed from the identified Thai characteristics, pillars of OTOP and modifications of OSOP with contextualizing the Klong Toey conditions. These pre-conditions are variables of assumptions which deal with factors such as governmental implementations, social norms and theoretical framework:

**Stabilizing intuitionalism with transparency**

The political scene is currently fluctuating which impacts the stabilization of consolidating intuitionalism. This is a disadvantage of providing the overall development, country wide. Promoting good governance at high level politics must also be representative on local level. With the interruptions of coup d’états the trust towards institutions may be a weakening factor. Transparency of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95} Boonyabancha \textit{sine anno}
\item \textsuperscript{96} Wongtada, Virakul and Singhapakdi 2005: 620
\item \textsuperscript{97} Ockey 2004: 125
\item \textsuperscript{98} Pagenation maps \textit{sine anno}
\item \textsuperscript{99} UNDP 2003: xi
\item \textsuperscript{100} Ockey 2004.: 148
\end{itemize}
how governmental work is conducted, work against corruption and access to open discussions are important features of democratization. The governmental importance affects the participatory inclusiveness and willingness of empowering the citizens; strong governmental institutions carry their citizens and not overturning them.

**Empowerment through education**

Implementing OSOP requires focus on education. Empowerment which aims to strengthen self-confidence, establish accessible toolkits for development and power-sharing must build an platform of pre-conditions. Through teaching the participants in the OSOP project about market demands, efficiency, capacity building and empowering local leaders to enhance more formal power. Using education to colour new objectives and goals – for individuals as well as collectively. In the Thai society Buddhism have a central role and the temples are often used as meetings points. To ease the burden of creating new sites of empowerment it may be efficient to use places of high value in the life of Thais.

**Participation by involvement**

Being a collectivistic society Thailand has the advantage of cooperation and group dynamics which trigs each other. Using common values, symbols, attitudes and structures to motivate participation towards joint aims must be seen as positive elements of increasing participation. Involvement in an early stage of OSOP and highlight the value of local leaders and overall population’s achievements can constitute favourable outcomes. The mobilizing force in Thai society is clear while observing its people and customs. Governmental input shall act as supportive while the main direction and work is to be handed to the locals in the Klong Toey slum.

**Formalizing the informal**

OSOP doesn’t necessary have to be the main income of a household, it is rather an opportunity of emphasizing previous activities with a legal stamp. The informal market will not vanish but by embracing certain channels of formal occupation may also open up roads of socio-economical upgrades in Klong Toey and other slums. Formalizing the informal may also nourish the power distance between slum dwellers and politics. Using existing ways of living hood, like the hongtao’s, and established networks are of high value within the slum and its development. By including the slum dwellers into formal markets it also embraces those as a market group instead a neglected outsider.

**Contextualized environment and variation**

OSOP would differ from the original OTOP, the variation amongst the habitansts and their regional origin has the effect of a diverse population. In rural settings most people have founded products or
services which are specific for the village; in the slums the variation of the dwellers will result in what conditions that is available. Considering the area, which is a port, it could be services but also markets like tourism or using material from the location close to the canals. The products and services derive from the local potentials, revealed as well as unrevealed. Many people in the Klong Toey slum comes from north-eastern parts of Thailand, these are the poorest but also have great knowledge in agriculture. Perhaps developing gardening in the slums can be a result of implementing OSOP.

The table below follows a SWOT- presentation of OTOP. An outline of the OTOP idea that resembles the elements of OSOP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL/ CULTURAL</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen urban and rural know how into a local context</td>
<td>Lack of mutual variables of producing/providing product or service</td>
<td>Power sharing concept</td>
<td>Creating back lashing competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embrace historical characteristics</td>
<td>Changing mindsets</td>
<td>Creating new options</td>
<td>Not foster creativity and low level of challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ECONOMICAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>WEAKNESSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>THREATS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empower traditional sources of income</td>
<td>Difficult to convince to convert to work with the project</td>
<td>Using local contexts and circumstances to become competitive with other economical sectors</td>
<td>Time- and capital consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration to urban economical activities</td>
<td>Neglect the demand on the market – analysis and realistic approach is a must</td>
<td>Decentralization of economical activities</td>
<td>Finding existing market to sell the products/ services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embracing cooperative collaborations</td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing alternative income sources</td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>POLITICAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>WEAKNESSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>THREATS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting participation</td>
<td>Low trust towards the political scene</td>
<td>Engage more people and establish important factors of good governance</td>
<td>Lack of local motivation, it must be bottom-up approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nourish good governance and establishing local leaders</td>
<td>Lack of interest to participate</td>
<td>Human resource development</td>
<td>Providing tools but lack of effort from locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hidden agendas and personal interest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Political instability and corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Discussion

The bottom-up approach is widely recognized as a current wind in development studies. Using the participatory development and empowerment theory is to understand the wider value of strengthening socio-economical foundations. Implementing previous tools of development, from a rural context, into a reality of a slum dweller shall emphasize values of variety, local knowledge and challenges. United Nation Development Program (UNDP) released in 2003 the *Thailand Human Development Report*, which explained the rise of community participation as a growing important pillar in the Thai society. With the increasing numbers of engaged NGO’s, locals in the communities themselves and government focus have contributed to the promotion of community development. ¹⁰¹ OTOP is one outcome from the sufficiency approach and a link between collectivism and its norms and features.

People in the Klong Toey slum, and other slums in Thailand, tend to act in the informal sector. Implementing OSOP is not aiming unrealistically to become a main occupation; it is rather a project that highlights either previous supplementary activities or yet undiscovered local potentials which supply the opportunity of conducting formalized work. Informal activities often derive from direct local demand and have entrepreneurial features. OSOP products or services mustn’t be sustainable in the sense of providing great revenues. Although they shall be seen as tools of empowerment through education and increase self-confidence in persuading own and collaborative business. A dynamic feature in a fluctuating reality.

As the quotation by Somsook Boonyabancha in the beginning of this study states; there are always those who wins on somebody else’s lost. Development is a varied process with different stakeholders and the prejudices about the slum dwellers as deedless group must be given a more vivid insight with its multi-facettted reality. Integrating different actors in common goals empowers different levels of actions. By using existing advantages of collaboration and networks to approach locals, identifying key persons and integrate the slum with urban politics. And to embrace the neglected group as a part of the urban sphere is a hope to build a more sustainable urbanization and manage the urban poor with a greater understanding and more accessible formal markets. Like OVOP and OTOP stress the importance of the human capital more than the physical outcome.

For the establishment of a participatory development there must exist a trust toward the stakeholders, especially the locals, and empower them with the confidence of their own capacity. Such things have to source from local decisions and results of the voices included. The participatory perspectives are interested in many ways; one way is how the power sharing relationship between multiple

¹⁰¹ UNDP 2003: xi
backgrounds communicates to creative solutions. Understanding the own role require investments of capital and time and like this study is stating that the effort input is more durable in the long run. Approaching development issues must be realistic but they cannot afford to lose creativity and including different perspectives. Insufficient commitment, mismanagement, hidden agendas and corruption are just some of many fatal elements in conducting good governance.

Due to the limitation of writing this study on a theoretical basis the study would be recommended to complement with a case study based from the presented variables of the Klong Toey slum. Such a case study could involve wider issues of entrepreneurship in the Thai society, interviews and search what kind of products or services could be produces. Further research can also ask for the involvement of other stakeholders like the harbour administration and local companies to provide participatory attitudes towards the slum dwellers. Including more creative solutions and supplement other development tools that could be combined with the OSOP idea; increasing the variables of accessibility to formal markets.
8. Conclusions

This study has been theoretically applied, based from the ideas of OTOP and systematically implemented into the Klong Toey slum environments. There are several conclusions that shall be stated that derives from the study, such as the cultural characteristics of Thailand or the highlighted challenges of OSOP.

- Investing in human capital is a sustainable direction and increases participation. Empowerment is often associated with community development in Thailand, mainly due to the collectivistic characteristics of the nation.

- Both empowerment and participatory theory are active in micro and macro levels. Meaning that empowerment can emphasize individual and community strengthening. Participation can be conducted on high and local level of decision making. Participatory approach has also indicated to bring increased expenses but is a positive indicator in the long run perspectives.

- Empowerment can be consolidated in several ways; one way is through educating locals. In the OSOP idea the empowerment would focus on teaching about economics, markets, production and nurture cooperative spirits.

- There is a need of expanding the definition of the urban poor. May the reflection not only limit upon infrastructural issues but also involve social and economical dimensions. It is important to act sensitive towards the local contexts and be aware of the overall reality of the locals.

- Establishing a platform for formalizing the informal. This kind of support could increase economical legitimacy for the urban poor. Using the original ideas from OTOP, with modifications, to expand the job-security in the slums.

- Implementing OSOP must reflect on the variety of its population. The products or services mustn’t be homogeneous; a diversified outcome should be embraced.

- There are several obstacles and challenges that affect the implementation of OSOP; political insecurity, mismanagement, varied demographic spread and avoiding mistakes similar to OTOP

- The empowerment approach shall see through that governmental input doesn’t interfere with creative solutions that derive from locals. Trusting the bottom-up approach as a sustainable way.
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