

Where Has the Municipal Money Gone? An Analysis of How and How Much Municipal Governments Subsidize Regional Activities

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a survey of 2009 and 2010 Thai municipal budgets. The sample consists of 972 municipalities of various sizes and socioeconomic characteristics throughout Thailand. Additionally, in-depth case studies were conducted in three municipalities. The findings show that about 82 percent of the municipalities contributed funding to programs undertaken by provincial administration agencies, totalling 170.3 and 133.7 million baht in fiscal 2009 and 2010, respectively. The findings indicate that municipalities view provincial administration programs as lacking transparency, as well as duplicating or overlapping with local government jurisdictions. This raises the issue of role conflict between local authorities and provincial administration, which exercises the power of oversight over many local government expenditures. On the one hand, provincial administration can abuse its power by pressuring municipalities for fiscal support; on the other hand, municipalities can bribe provincial authorities by providing fiscal support in exchange for loosening regulatory control. This research calls for (i) redefinition of the roles and authority of provincial administration agencies, and (ii) readjustment of the local-provincial fiscal relationship in order to promote local autonomy and good governance.

Keywords: Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations, Municipal Finance
Local Government Supervision

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Participation in Municipality Development Planning: The Comparison of Khon Kaen Municipality and Kalasin Municipality

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Abstract

This article looks at Kalasin (smaller municipality) and Khon Kaen (larger municipality) with the following research objectives: 1) to study levels of citizen participation in municipality development planning; 2) to study how people become involved in municipality development planning; 3) to study problems and obstacles of municipality development planning; and 4) to compare people's participation in municipality development planning between the smaller and larger municipalities. The research methodology consisted of both qualitative and quantitative methods, based on a survey sample of 397 respondents from Khon Kaen and 394 respondents from Kalasin. The study found that people's participation in both municipalities was confined to the beginning of the planning process. Holding civil society forums seemed to show that each municipality provided opportunities for its citizens to participate; however, citizens had few chances to inspect, follow up, and evaluate the plans. Important problems and obstacles to participation were a lack of budget and expertise in some essential fields such as veterinary medicine, nursing and health care. A comparison between the two municipalities showed that level of people's participation in municipality development planning

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was higher in the larger municipality (Khon Kaen) than in the smaller municipality (Kalasin). There were several contributing factors: first, Khon Kaen was divided into a number of smaller communities; second, the Khon Kaen Municipal Council had devolved authority to each community to propose and carry out municipality-funded projects serving community needs; third, the resultant increase in local employment and participation opportunities for local people in regard to project proposals and project management also served to increase stakeholder commitment to the participation process.

Keywords: People's Participation, Municipality Development Plan
Khon Kaen Municipality, Kalasin Municipality

The Understanding and Attitudes of Local Government CEOs Concerning Their Goals, Their Authority and Their Role in Natural Resources Management

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to investigate local government administrators' understanding of the ultimate goals of, and their readiness for, decentralization of natural resources management, by examining their knowledge and understanding of existing laws, together with their recommendations for additional laws and regulations. The study involves a survey of all local governments, comprising municipalities and Tambon (subdistrict) Administrative Organizations. Of the questionnaires distributed, 2,680 were returned representing a 34.47 percent response rate. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, factor analysis and cluster analysis. We found that local governments' visions differ concerning the scope of decentralization. Decentralization which emphasized people's participation was by far the most popular, while self governance and revenue independence were given less attention. About 28 percent of the local governments were ready to embrace the concepts of people's participation, public service focus and self government, but they lacked

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relevant knowledge needed for effective management. The local governments in the sample wanted increased authority for natural resources management, especially authority related to fisheries resources. They were less keen to increase their revenue-raising power. The results suggest the significance of the gradual delegation of power according the readiness of local governments. Moreover, there is a need to improve practical knowledge related to natural resources regulations and laws, and to stimulate the ability to increase revenue raising capacities of local governments.

Keywords: Role of Local Government, Natural Resources Management
Decentralization

Weaknesses of Studies on People's Participation in Public Policymaking in Thailand

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Abstract

This article is a meta-analysis of 53 research studies conducted between 2002-2008 on people's participation in public policymaking in Thailand. The review identifies essential features, analyzes the knowledge boundaries, and identifies strengths and weaknesses of the research. The results of the meta-analysis show moderate levels of participation, using field surveys as the main data collection method. Participation categories comprised civil society, resource and environment, public health, internal peace, local government, and community development. Research methodology was restricted to survey research only, and people's participation was informed by the World Bank's conceptualization in the 1980s. This extended to participation in thinking, decision-making, implementing, sharing benefits, and monitoring and evaluating developmental projects. Weaknesses of the research included questionable validity of the research findings owing to inadequate methodologies, as well as out-of-date conceptualizations of people's participation, where little attention was paid to the idea of people as the target of development. Other weaknesses included misunderstanding the purpose of participation, incorrect conclusions, confusion between normal conduct and participatory

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activities, and problems in the specification of cause-effect relationships. However, the research studies had two key strengths: they served to identify the characteristics of participation as well as behavioral problems associated with participation, and several studies did in fact focus on people as the target of development.

Keywords: Participation, Development, Participation in Projects,
Participatory Development

Excessive Force of Police Power in Thailand: The Effect upon Human Right Violations

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Abstract

This article examines the thesis that use of excessive force by police constitutes a human rights violation. Documentary analysis shows that the use of excessive force violates human rights, personal liberty and fundamental personal rights, as well as human integrity. Moreover, the excessive use of force by police is an abuse of police authority and constitutes noncompliance with procedural justice processes: for example, threatening and torturing suspects to force confessions in order to conclude a case, extrajudicial killing of suspects, and humiliating suspects in public.

Keywords: Use of Excessive Force, Police, Human Rights Violations

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