

How Faith Matters:
Al-Mubarak Muslim Community and Sustainable
Development - A Case Study from Udon Thani
Province of Isan Region of Thailand.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the role of faith in the development of Al-Mubarak Community, a minority Muslim community sited in a majority Buddhist village setting in Isan, the Northeastern region of the Kingdom of Thailand. It aimed to inform public policy processes and practices that support minority faith communities in Thai civil society, with a focus on inter-generational management of local environmental issues. The project used Participatory Action Research (PAR) principles and qualitative methods including, interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks, field observations and research journals. Ninety-nine community members participated, 76 Muslim members of Al-Mubarak Community and 23 Buddhist neighbours, from diverse backgrounds representing women, men, and male youth across the three generations of settlement, from several countries of origin, and with differing occupations and socio-economic status. Many had lived and worked together in the community since its inception 25 years earlier.

The findings showed since its establishment in 1995, Al-Mubarak Community has evolved to be a thriving Muslim community nested within a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and predominantly Buddhist community setting. Muslim and Buddhist neighbours consistently affirmed the close, respectful, and harmonious relationships that characterised “their” community, in contrast to inter-religious group tensions and conflict in other communities in the broader Southeast Asian region and the Southern Provinces of Thailand, in particular. Many Muslim participants held that Al-Mubarak Community was not just a community for Muslims, but also for other people of different faiths and backgrounds who could contribute to, and benefit from, the growth of this community. Buddhist participants noted that Al-Mubarak Community was a significant community for the Isan region, as a model where Muslims and their neighbours could live and learn together forever.

Discussion of findings was framed within 11 Thai cultural constructs acts of *Watthanatham khwām ngīep* - the culture of silence, *Khaojai bōribot kām Ptisamphanth* - understanding the setting for daily interactions, *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* - self-reliance, *Pheūoenbān* – sense of neighbourhood with its three component features: *Khunkhā rūam* - shared values, *Waineūacheūajai* – trust and *Phōnsawan* – gifts, *Phūseūpthōt* – the successors, *Panhā Singwaētlōm* - environmental issues, as well as *Pheūnthī poēt samrap phūying* - an open space for women and *Dunlayaphāp* – a balanced approach for development - to give rich local texture and nuance for fuller understandings, not included in Western or mainstream development perspectives.

The major future research recommendation and intention is to complete the action planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the original proposed research plan, unavoidably truncated because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A wealth of community data has now been collected to be used as the basis of these next steps for collaborative decision-making on community action priorities and community strategies for engaging with specific issues facing the community. There is will and solidarity in the community for this. A range of further policy and practice research recommendations are likely to arise from this for engagements within the community and with community stakeholders and local government.

Future research should also focus on future women's leadership and engagement roles in Muslim community development, and faith and inter-faith relationships in developing and sustaining *Pheūoenbān* - a sense of neighbourhood. The Thai construct of *Pheūoenbān*, sharing and caring, should be essential to Thailand's development policy and practice socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. A further contribution is the use of local, Thai, cultural constructs as lens into fuller understanding of the findings, e.g., *Watthanatham khwām ngīep*, the role of silence in Thai social interaction and its influence on academic inquiry in this project.

These findings show Al-Mubarak Community as a successful, intentional minority Muslim community in a Buddhist majority village setting applying their faith values at the core of their community's development. Key features contributing to this successful journey, appear to be early leadership and planning, significant roles for women, and especially the role intermarriage between the communities has played in creating the harmonious inter-faith relationship. The strength of Muslim women's leadership was an unusual finding in terms of other Muslim Thai and international communities and deserves future research focus for that reason. Research into how this level of leadership developed in this community within the broader social setting of Thailand's highly gendered and patriarchal/militaristic governance systems could also produce critical insights for future sustainable community policy development. Given global, regional and national Islamophobia and religious tensions, this study shows a positive faith-based model can promote understanding and the creation of sustainable inter-faith community living.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology
	Ethics Committee
CBAT	Participatory Community-Based Agrotourism
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
FEDMIN	Foundation for Education and Development of Muslims in Northeast Thailand
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
LGA	Local Government Association
MNCs	Multi-National Corporations
MFBOs	Muslim Faith-Based Organisations
NCPO	National Council for Peace and Order
NHCO	National Health Commission Office
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SAO	Subdistrict Administrative Organization
SEP	Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
STW	Santhitham Wittaya School
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VHV	Village Health Volunteer
WEF	World Economic Forum

GLOSSARY OF THAI WORDS

<i>Chumchon</i>	community
<i>Dunlayaphāp</i>	a balanced approach for development
<i>Greng-jai</i>	not wanting to embarrass/shame or make people awkward
<i>Jao āwāt</i>	the abbot of Buddhist temples
<i>Khaojai</i>	understand
<i>Khaojai bōribot kām Ptisamphanth</i>	understanding the setting for daily interactions
<i>Khaotheung</i>	reach out
<i>Khon Bueng Kan Mai Aao Masjid</i>	People of Bueng Kan do not accept the mosque's construction
<i>Khon Isan</i>	Local Isan people from north-eastern region, Thailand
<i>Khunkhā rūam</i>	shared values
<i>Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng</i>	self-reliance
<i>Khwām ngīep</i>	silence
<i>Panhā Singwaētløm</i>	environmental issues/problems
<i>Phatthanā</i>	develop
<i>Pheūnthī poēt samrap phūying</i>	an open space for women
<i>Pheūoenbān</i>	a sense of neighbourhood or neighbourhood building

<i>Phønsawan</i>	gifts
<i>Phūseūpthøt</i>	the successors (who would take care of their community)
<i>phuyaiban</i>	village chief
<i>Por-jai</i>	being grateful for what you have /have been given
<i>Waineūacheūajai</i>	trust
<i>Watthanatham khwām ngīep</i>	the culture of silence

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 28 February 2022

DEDICATION

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another.”

(The Noble Qur'an 49: 13)

To

My Sweetest Wife, Fatma and My Adorable Daughter, Zulfa,

who have given me your unconditional love and relentless patience when I was away for such a long time. Your enduring devotion has become the central part of my PhD journey and my life. My love and prayers are forever with you both.

“May God bless, love and protect you both eternally”

To

The People of Al-Mubarak,

who dearly gave voice to their beloved community development journey. You all taught me how to be always humble in my limited knowledge and wisdom when I had to deal with my new knowledge and experiences in the field. I dedicate this thesis to you.

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"If I constantly travel on the road searching for His knowledge and wisdom. In that case, I intend to be a positive instrument of the Most Gracious to help my human fellows develop and safeguard this beautiful planet sustainably and flourishingly. It is for the sake of all of us and our posterity. That is all about my promising invocation to God Almighty."

ETHICS APPROVAL

This research was reviewed and approved by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on the 8 July 2019 (AUTEC 18/428).

CHAPTER 1: THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The Constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand influences the future for all Thais affecting the relationship between, and, among, those who adhere to different faiths, religions, and cultures in their communities. The Directive Principles of Fundamental State Policies of the Constitutions, particularly in the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions, confirmed a fundamental principle, that "the State shall patronise and protect Buddhism and other religions, promote good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions as well as encourage the application of religious principles to create virtue and develop the quality of life" (p.15, p.23) (James,1998: The Royal Thai Government Gazette, 1997, 2007).

The Kingdom of Thailand has never declared "Buddhism" as its 'official state religion' even though 94 percent of Thailand's population is Buddhist (Pew Research Center, 2010). The 2016 Draft Constitution (The Library of Congress, 2016) and the 2017 Thai Constitution also carried over the provisions from the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions on the freedom of religion, that all individuals are equal before the law and allowed them to profess, observe, and practice any religion of their choice. But the Royal Thai Government officially recognised five religions: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christianity, and does not recognise any other groups outside these five recognised religions (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2018).

For the first time, the phrase 'the safety of the State' was added to Chapter 3, section 31 on Rights and Liberties of the Thai People, promulgated in The Royal Thai Government Gazette (2017) as follows:

A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion and shall enjoy the liberty to exercise or practice a form of worship in accordance with his or her religious principles, provided that it shall not be adverse to the duties of all Thai people, neither shall it endanger *the safety of the State*, nor shall it be contrary to public order or good morals (p.9.)

This new provision is a declaration that freedom of religion should not jeopardise 'the safety of the State'. In addition, for the first time the promulgation of the 2017 Thai Constitution included protecting and safeguarding 'Theravada Buddhism' from 'being undermined in any form'. The full section 67 printed in the Royal Thai Government Gazette (2017) states:

The State should support and protect *Buddhism and other religions*. In supporting and protecting Buddhism, which is the religion observed by the majority of Thai people for a long period of time, the State should promote and support education and dissemination of dharmic principles of Theravada Buddhism for the development of mind and wisdom development and shall have measures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism from being undermined in any form. The State should also encourage Buddhists to participate in implementing such measures or mechanisms. (p.17)

Some academics such as Affatato (2017) claimed that the 2017 Thai Constitution could erode and undermine religious harmony in the country because of its specific mandate for the State to promote Theravada Buddhism. It raised concern, especially among Christian and Muslim minority communities, about the potential application of blasphemy laws. Also, Tonsakulrungruang (2018) raised issues about a narrow interpretation of protecting only Buddhism over all other religions and beliefs in Thailand. Rojanaphruk (2018) claimed that the 2017 Constitution supports efforts to raise 'Buddhism' to be superior to other religions in Thailand (Kulabkaew, 2019).

The draft Thai Constitution was the subject of a national referendum in August 2016. At this time, I travelled across Pattani province, one of the four southernmost provinces through Narathiwat, Yala, Satun, and Pattani near the Malaysian border, where the majority are ethnic Malay Muslims (Gilquin, 2005; Mustafa et al., 2021; Yusuf, 2007). There was a big rumour that the Royal Thai government would diminish the religion of Islam and close Islamic private schools, particularly in the Deep South region, where Muslims are a majority of the population. I observed and interviewed many Malay Muslims who were uncomfortable about the draft section 31 and voted "No" in the referendum. At the same time, I observed that in the north and the northeast (hereafter,

the Isan region) regions, the majority Buddhist population voted “No”, but they were considered to be voicing opposition to the military government, rather than the religious implications of the draft constitution.

As a result of the referendum, the military government realised there was a high risk of increasing discontent among the Muslims in the southernmost provinces. In addition, there were Buddhist movements, like the Assembly of Buddhists for National Security in the Isan region, protesting about mosque building in Khon Kean and Sakon Nakhon in Isan region and even in the Nan province of the northern region (The Nation,2016).

1.2 My Research Motivation

I was born in a Muslim village in a majority Buddhist area in southern Thailand. Nationally, Thailand is predominantly Buddhist. I was sent to a Buddhist temple school and was primarily educated in public (Buddhist) schools. I have lived and worked for 21 years with Muslim communities in the Isan region of Thailand, where Buddhists are the majority community. Social and religious diversity has become a passionate issue that I have dealt with daily throughout my life. I believe that people of different faiths and religions can work and live together to change society positively. I perceive those cultures, beliefs, religions, and faiths can be a powerful and positive force to build sustainable and inclusive communities and societies.

In 2013, I started working as a lecturer in the Public Administration Division, Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kean University, a public research University in the Isan region, Thailand. For eight years, I have been teaching courses around organisation theory, human security administration, international relations, and non-profit organisation management courses for undergraduate and postgraduate students. I am passionate about the role of the public sector and civil society sector in promoting well-being and quality of life for various groups, particularly minority and religious people and organisations. In my view, the Thai

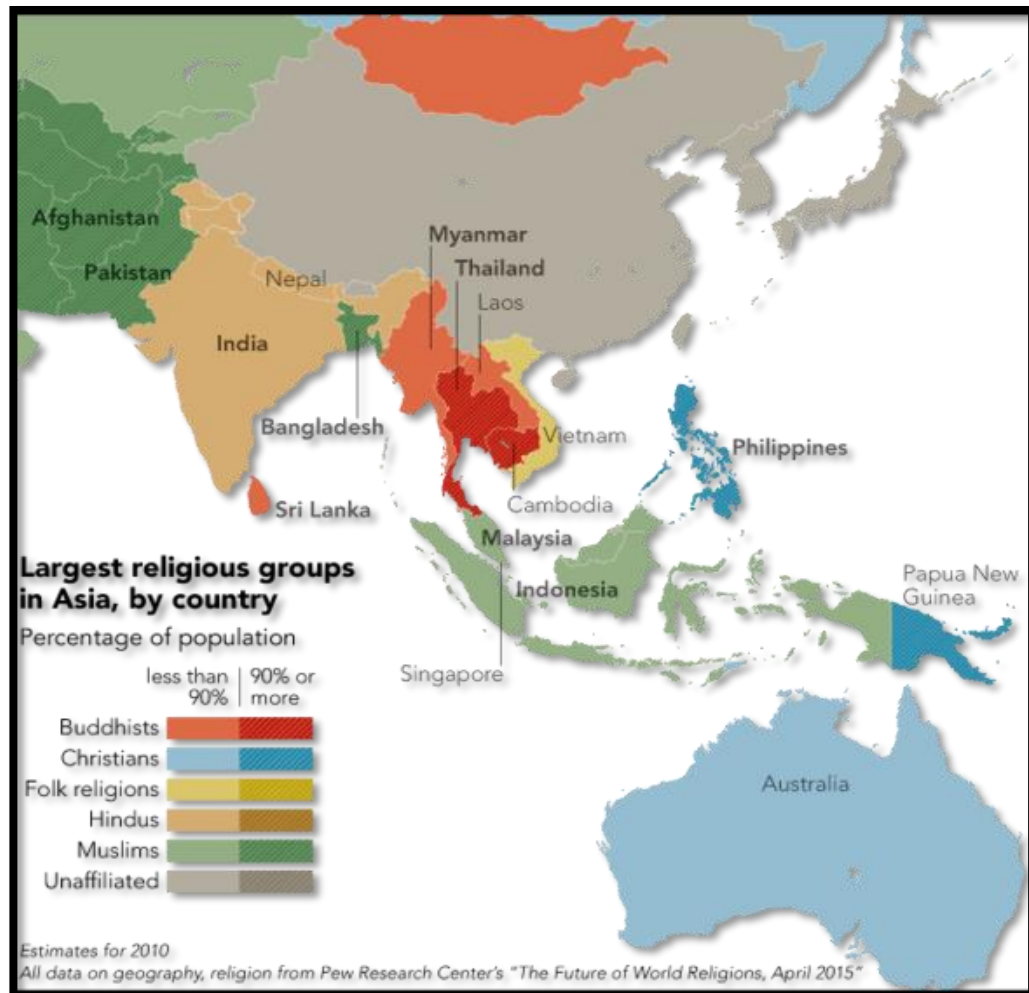
Constitution must support and provide equal space and vast opportunities for all Thais. At the same time, the Thai Constitutions must empower and enable ethnic, cultural and religious minority communities to have their bargaining space in public policy processes and practices in national development.

The Thai Constitution can work as a social equaliser to bring Thai people together, not push them apart. The Thai Constitution should play a vital role as guiding principles for Thai people to seek a better life and sustainable development, individually and collectively. I want to conduct this inquiry into the ability and potential that faith or religious communities might bring to national development at the grassroots level.

In this context, I formulated my first research question: How does the 2017 Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand's commitment to 'protect Buddhism and other religions' translate to community development policy and practice?

1.3 Muslims in a Regional Context

Asia contains tremendously rich cultural and religious diversity. Many diverse peoples are living together in peace and harmony. However, there are some areas where Muslims are associated with violence and conflicts with other faiths or authorities, such as in the genocide of Muslim communities in Rakhine State, Myanmar (The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017); the burqa ban in Sri Lanka (Haniffa, 2021); the Moro insurgency in the Mindanao region of the Philippines (Cline, 2000), Thailand's southern insurgency (Newton, 2021), genocide, crimes against humanity and torture against Uighurs in China's western region of Xinjiang (Roache, 2021), targeting Muslims under state laws on interfaith marriages in India (The Guardian Weekly, 2020) and the Taliban violating women's rights in Afganistan in fundamental extremism (Wintour, 2021). See Figure 1 for Asian regional religious hotspots.

Figure 1*Asian regional religious hotspots*

From *Religious extremism poses threat to ASEAN's growth: Aided by social media, hardliners gain mainstream support*, G.Robinson, 2017.

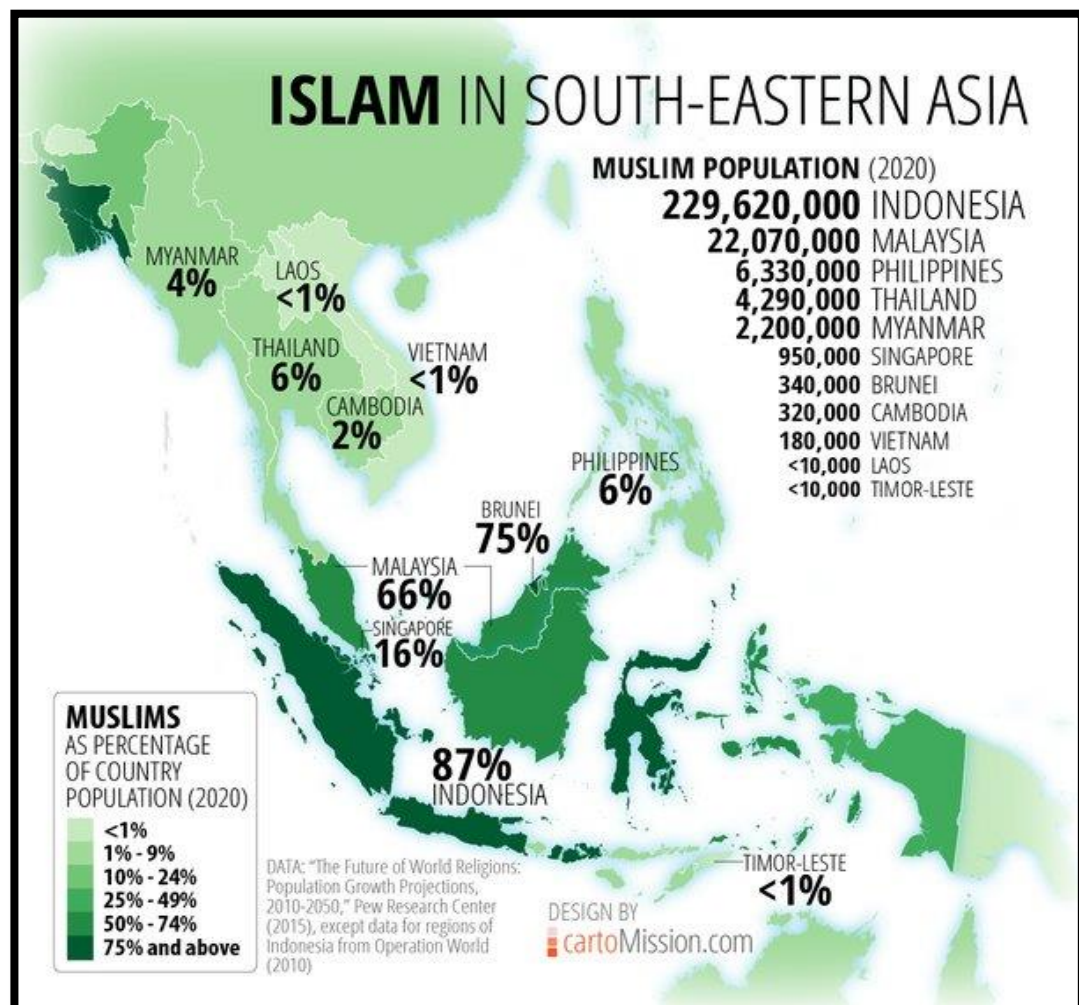
(<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/Religious-extremism-poses-threat-to-ASEAN-s-growth2>). Copyright 2017 by Nikkei Inc.

Islam spread to the kingdom of Thailand from the south, centre and north. It first arrived in southern Thailand in the 13th and 14th centuries, brought by Arab Muslim merchant activity spreading up from what are now Malaysia and Indonesia. Islam arrived in the Central Thai region during the 15th century through Shia Persian, when Sunni Indian Merchants settled in Ayudhya. Indian, Bengali, and Chinese Muslims came to the north

of Thailand between the 1870s and 1890s (Yusuf, 2006). Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in Thailand, though a minority at approximately 4-5% (Yusuf, 2006), except in the Deep South provinces bordering Malaysia where they are by far the majority (Yusuf, 2003, 2007). See Figure 2 for Southeast Asian Muslim population distribution.

Figure 2

Southeast Asian Muslim population distribution



Note. The Muslim population in Southeast Asian countries can be described as majority Muslims and minority Muslims separated throughout the region. From *Islam in Southeast Asia: Country, area & regional profiles/data*, by Cornell University Library, 2020. (<https://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=141521&p=926391>). Copyright 2020 by Cornell University Library.

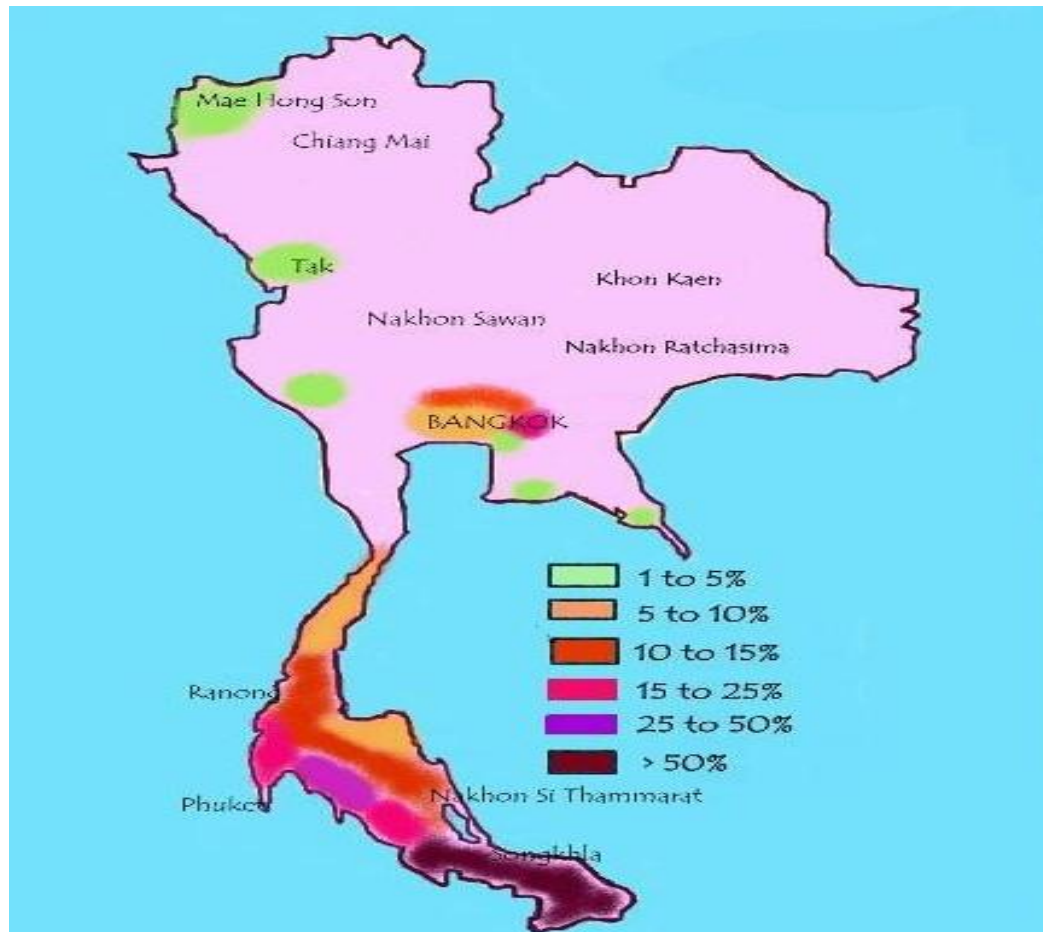
A study of the settlement of Muslims in the Isan region found that the first Muslim group that came to Isan region were “Pathan Muslims” from India (later to become part of north Pakistan) in the 1900s (J.Sohsan, 2007). Other Muslim groups that immigrated to Thailand since and continue to do so today are the “Malay” Muslims from the south and central regions and “Bengali” and Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar (J. Sohnan, 2010). Muslims in the Isan region have peacefully coexisted and built their communities with Buddhists for 120 years. (Prapertchob, 1984, 1993, 2001, 2010), in contrast to historic tensions in the deep southern provinces. See Figure 3 for Distribution of Muslim population in Thailand.

Islamophobia has a presence in the north and the Isan region in Thailand, where Muslims are a minority. In Nan province in the north region, as well as in Khon Kean, Bueng Kan, Sakon Nakhon, and Mukdahan provinces of the Isan region, small Buddhist groups protested against the construction of mosques. They claimed through social media that Muslims are controlling Thailand and establishing an Islamic state in Thailand (National News Bureau of Thailand, 2019). Such claims can create a sense of mistrust and misunderstanding between the Muslim and Buddhist communities in the Isan region, where both sides have lived side by side for decades.

In 2017 - 2018, the construction of a mosque in Bueng Kan province led to a Buddhist movement to launch a campaign called ‘Khon Bueng Kan Mai Aao Masjid’ (People of Bueng Kan do not accept the mosque’s construction), and they did not want to allow the Muslims to build their mosque in the province. Since then, there have been attempts to solve this ongoing tension by local Muslims and their networks in the Isan region, keen to develop a process of bringing Muslims and Buddhists together with the full assistance of the governor of Bueng Kan province and other local administrative bodies. The Muslim and Buddhists communities still needed to build trust between the two communities at the local level.

Figure 3

Distribution of Muslim population in Thailand



Note. The map indicates Muslims in northeast or Isan region are a minority compared to the southern region. From “Institutional Transformation of Madrasa of Muslim Minority in Thailand,” by I. Wekke, M. Ashrori, & B. Hamuddin, 2018. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 4(15), p.17. Copyright 2018 by Faculty of Tarbiya and Teacher Training UIN Sunan Gunung Djati.

Another story spread from Thai Muslims in southern Thailand, reporting that the COVID vaccines have been made by Jews, who needed to destroy and kill Muslims across the world. Like many US fundamentalist Christian groups, many fundamentalist Muslims have campaigned against vaccines. The consequences of the rumours have been that many Muslims rejected getting the vaccine protecting them from the COVID-19

pandemic. They believed that the pandemic occurred through the Will of God and God will protect them. These two cases indicate that the trust and understanding between Muslims and other faith communities are increasingly critical.

On March 15, 2019, whilst I was back in Thailand doing field work, my supervisor emailed me: "I am thinking of you and your faith community with the shocking shooting in Christchurch in Aotearoa; this is a very sad day." I read the email and then checked the news from New Zealand. The news reported that 51 Muslims were killed at mosques in Christchurch. It was an event that shook ethnic, religious and multifaith communities in New Zealand and in the world (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2020). This tragic event shook me to consider that nowhere is safe anymore, even in New Zealand, one of the most peaceful and safer societies globally.

The Christchurch attacks and other conflict events in Asia create mistrust and suspicion between Muslims and their friends of other faiths who have lived in peaceful harmony in the same communities and societies across the globe. As a Muslim researcher, I aspire to do this research to investigate how, in this global environment, Muslims might use their faith values to contribute to wider communities, positively and constructively.

1.4 Introducing the Community

Historically, Ban Nong Muean Thao village was established in 1841 by Second Lieutenant Theing Kasemsuk and his assistant, Mr. Onjan Kerpanya. Initially, the village comprised of ten households totalling 30,400 square meters. Over time the population grew up to 503 households (530 men and 564 women). The total population today is 1,094 people. In 1973, the village was officially separated as Ban Kao Sarn village, an independent village. The Ministry of the Interior, the Department of Provincial Administration, declared the village independent. The village population was composed of farmers, officials, employees, small business owners, and other occupations.

The physical infrastructure of Ban Nong Muean Thao village includes two Buddhist temples, an Islamic Mosque, a Muslim foundation headquarters building, a club for Isan converted Muslims, many ponds around the village, and Santhitham Wittaya School (STW School). There are various community groups, such as the Women's Development Group, the aerobic sports group, and the Village Health Volunteers (VHV) whose goals are to promote and empower the villagers' well-being and quality of life. In 2021, the village along with the Al-Mubarak Community is facing the spread of urbanisation. Easy logistics connect this area to Mittraphap Road, the main highway linking Bangkok to the Isan region. The village is about seventeen kilometres to Udon Thani City, Udon Thani International airport and seventy kilometres to the Thai-Laos border.

Al-Mubarak Community was the first pilot project for Muslim community development in the Isan region. The late Hajji Haroon Samadeh and his family were the first family to settle there. He convinced other Muslim families to buy land from one of his Buddhist friends so that the Muslim community could exist harmoniously with neighbours in the Udon Thani Province.

There are 15 Muslim households, 82 people (48 females and 34 males), equal to 0.82% of the population living in the Al-Mubarak Community area, located in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. In 2019, 170 Muslim families consisting of 350 Muslims (200 female and 150 males) from surrounding districts had registered as members of the Al-Mubarak Mosque. They called themselves "the People of Al-Mubarak". The community serves Muslims in at least five districts in Udon Thani province, namely, Mueang Udon Thani, Kumphawapi, Nong Han, Non-Sa-at and Nong Saeng, including migrant Muslims from foreign countries like Myanmar, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Norway, Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Most community members have been identified as "middle-class people"; some are retired state officials, some are business-people, some have their own shops, some are soldiers, and some are in the agricultural livestock sector.

Good relationships between the community and governmental agencies at regional and local levels are essential for community development. The community actively engages with activities initiated by those agencies. For instance, the community sends representatives to the National Father's Day events on December 5 annually. Both local and regional governments have supported the Muslim community's development through Al-Mubarak Mosque's activities. In particular, the Ministry of Interior contributes the salaries of the Imam, the Khateeb, and the Bilal, three essential important positions in the elected mosque committees, who need to take responsibility for the mosque affairs. Mosques are required to register with the Ministry of the Interior.

I first visited Al-Mubarak Community as a teacher volunteer working with this community through a Summer Camp in 1999. After graduating in 2000, I decided to move from my home in a southern province to be a full-time officer at the FEDMIN Foundation, working with Muslim communities across the Isan region. My first role was to coordinate and support the leaders and members of all Muslim communities in the Isan region to build their community mosques and promote a sense of peaceful coexistence among Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians to live together and think about their sustainable community development together. I was promoted to Secretary-General of the FEDMIN Foundation, and I attempted to initiate FEDMIN's policies on community development and many activities that brought Muslims and other faiths together.

It was these contexts and my reflections on Al-Mubarak Community that led to my second two thesis research questions: How can the Muslim community apply their faith values in the public policy environment of community development? And What are the challenges and opportunities for using faith values in community development in the Udon Thani province?

1.5 Research Objectives

There are fewer studies on relations between public policy and faiths than between faiths and history, and other fields. This relationship needs to be addressed and analysed in a highly complex world (Singh, 2016; Sofjan, 2016). A critical public policy question is how Thai constitutional provisions provide opportunities for religious groups, as part of Thai civil society, to actively engage in community development programmes that help advance inter-faith dialogue and understanding and build community peace and cohesion. There is little understanding in Thai Public Policy Academia of engaging in bottom-up public policy activity, consistent with top-down hierarchical structures that characterise Thai personal, social and political relations. Thus, this research seeks to make a significant contribution to the Thai academic environment, challenging the usual top-down public policy approach. This research study may provide a model for Muslim communities in Asia and the ASEAN region, where military forces have a history of engagement with Muslim communities. There is a need for another way to engage across faiths.

In Thailand there has been no progress in promoting faith communities to be a part of public policy processes and practices. There is no leadership, no State agency engagement with faith organisations as essential civil society representatives, and little interest at the central government level. This creates the space for policies to be more seriously addressed between people of faiths or faith communities at the local level, as part of the nation's development and reform. This circumstance has encouraged all faith communities at the local level to think about their religious tolerance and harmonious coexistence in their community development policy and practice. Some local governments have been mobilised to work closely with faith communities to strengthen and enhance an atmosphere of religious harmony and understanding. But Governments alone cannot solve tensions and problems caused by faith or religious matters. The

active participation of faith communities is crucial and relevant to the nation's development and its public policy environment of community development.

Therefore, the objectives of this research study are to investigate the role of faith in the development of Al-Mubarak Community and its environment, and to seek to inform public policy processes and practices in community development that support minority faith communities, as part of Thai civil society. One focus of my research is the inter-generational management of environmental issues.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This qualitative research provides a study of Al-Mubarak Community, a minority Muslim community and their Buddhist neighbours, applying their faith values in the environment of community development. The methodology chosen is Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the methods used are interviews, focus groups, transect walks and the researcher's daily reflective journaling.

A PAR process in sustainable Muslim community development research in a context of different faiths requires trust in people as a central core of the PAR process. Such a research study is also about understanding people and ourselves. The PAR process requires time for the steppingstones of trust-building in the research process.

Community development is about empowerment and solidarity, the community capacity of people to make positive changes through their own contributions. to meet the needs of their beloved community individually and collectively. Community development is about people's empowerment and solidarity in their own community, not being dependent on external factors outside the community –e.g., governmental agencies or external NGOs. Empowerment and solidarity are about the role of all people living and involved in community development, not just the leaders, but youth, elders, women, and men, who have the ability and gifts to contribute to sustainable community development.

The research questions to what extent faith is a central dimension in community development. A faith-based community brings people together around shared values and enables them to look at how they can organise to bring their resources together to advance their community, how people can look at their environment, how they can build a deep and meaningful relationship with each other (Muslims, Buddhists, and other faiths). For faith-based communities, spirituality is also a part of their culture.

1.7 Research Design

The methodological framework which guides this qualitative research focuses on the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and applies qualitative methods to respond to the research questions. This qualitative research was conducted in Al-Mubarak Community located in Ban Nong Muean Thao village, Muean, Udon Thani province of Isan region, Thailand.

All participants came from diverse backgrounds including Buddhist and Islamic women, boys, and men across the adult age groups and professions, and several countries of origin. These families have been living and working together in the community since its establishment in 1995. The Al-Mubarak Community has evolved as a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic community in the Isan region.

The research study involves interviews with two persons (one male, one female) representing Al-Mubarak Mosque, two persons (one male, one female) who were the first generation of the community, two persons (one male, one female) working with the community's school, two persons (one male, one female) working with the community's FEDMIN Foundation, and focus groups with representatives of Muslims and Buddhists, the community's Muslim women group, youth football players and a Buddhist group.

In the transect walks method, I invited three men and three women, one from each of the Muslim community's generations of settlers, to make a transect walk across the village with me. This method involves walking about the village across the community

and its key community features to prompt recollections about the community as it developed, matters such as key decision making, key players, key events in history of the community, and the changes in the physical environment.

My research aims to bring people of different faiths together in their community to think and develop their future in community development policy and practice. The PAR process for this sustainable community development research was planned to have the following four iterative phases: 1) developing a shared understanding of community development issues and priorities in the Al-Mubarak Community, 2) Co-creating action plans, 3) Implementing action plans and 4) Evaluation and reflections on action plans. However, only phases 1 and 2 have been completed, due to significant disruption to my research plans by the COVID 19 pandemic. I was effectively stranded in New Zealand for 2020-2021 and unable to return to Thailand to complete stages 3 and 4. I intend to progress to stages 3 and 4 on my return to Thailand as a post-degree project after completing my formal studies.

1.8 Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 The Context of the Study outlines the introduction to the study that highlights the 2017 Thai Constitution and its implications for the study, my critical interests as an academic in a minority Muslim community who grew up in a majority Buddhist society. It also presents the historical contexts of Muslims in Thailand and the Isan region, the introduction to Ban Nong Muean Thao village and Al-Mubarak Community, research questions and objectives, research design and chapter overviews.

Chapter 2 Literature Review illustrates the four concepts relevant to the study: Thailand's constitutional commitment to protect Buddhism and other religions, the influence of faith values in the public policy environment of community development, concepts of community development, and the geographical and faith-based context in the Isan region.

Chapter 3 Methodology discusses the methodological framework, which guides this qualitative research, focusing on Participatory Action Research (PAR). The chapter considers the design of qualitative research, PAR as a methodological approach, the practice of PAR in the field, PAR process in sustainable community development and PAR case studies in Thailand and Isan context in particular.

Chapter 4 Methods examines the research process, ethical considerations, participants' criteria and recruitment, the methods used in the data collection process - interviews, focus groups, transect walks, fieldwork journals, and transcription. It also describes the NVivo data analysis approach and the research reflections on the field.

Chapter 5 Al-Mubarak Community is the first of four Findings' chapters and explores the six characteristics of Al-Mubarak Community emerging from the study: a community of living together with others, a community of intention, a community of migrants, a community of kinship, a community of opportunities and Al-Mubarak as a neighbourhood.

Chapter 6 Faith matters demonstrates how faith matters to Al-Mubarak Community's development and its members. The chapter shows how the holding of faith values can provide for confidence-building among the members of the Al-Mubarak Community, and the vital roles of women in building a better community where they live and belong. This chapter touches on the leadership styles of the Al-Mubarak Community and the unique characteristics of Muslim Faith-based Organisations (MFBOs) in community development processes and practices.

Chapter 7 Al-Mubarak Community's Development draws the distinctive characteristics of Al-Mubarak Community's development: recognising people as the heart of community development, encouraging shared consultation with trust, utilising social media in supporting community development, making living space for all members, enabling the spiritual dimension and bridging the intergenerational transition

gap. The chapter uncovers the major challenges faced which could erode the long journey for the Al-Mubarak Community in the Isan context of sustainable development.

Chapter 8 Sustainable Development for Al-Mubarak Community responds to the research questions on sustainable community development. It also identifies concerns about environmental issues: air pollution, climate change, noise, severe floods, forest conservation, waste and water management.

Chapter 9 Discussion and Recommendations provides a detailed discussion of the key research findings from the data analysis presented in Chapters 5-8 and elaborates the key findings that respond to the three key research questions. Chapter 9 reflects on the recommendations for future research, contributions to the research field, limitations to the study and final remarks.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review is divided into four themes relevant to my study: Thailand's constitutional commitment to protecting Buddhism and other religions; the influence of faith values on the public policy environment of community development; concepts of community development; and the geographical and faith-based context in which the research is grounded.

2.1 Thailand's Constitutional Commitment to Protecting Buddhism and Other Religions

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand influences the future of all Thais, affecting the relationship between, and among, those who adhere to different faiths, religions, and cultures in their communities. The Directive Principles of Fundamental State Policies of the Constitutions, outlined in the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions, confirm that "the State shall patronise and protect Buddhism and other religions, promote good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions as well as encourage the application of religious principles to create virtue and develop the quality of life" (p.15, p.23) (The Royal Thai Government Gazette, 1997, 2007; Tonsakulrungruang, 2018).

Thailand is the world's most heavily Buddhist country with 94 percent of the population who are Buddhists, principally followers of Theravada Buddhism. Muslims make up about 4.5 percent of the population, while less than one percent identify themselves as Christians. Hinduism, Sikhism, and traditional religions such as animism, spirit and ancestor worship are also practised (China Pac International, 2013; Gilquin, 2005, Pew Research Center, 2010).

At the same time, Thailand has never formally declared Buddhism as its official state religion even though 94 percent of Thailand's population is Buddhist (Pew Research Center, 2010).

In 2017, the Department of Religious Affairs declared that the Royal Thai Government officially recognised five religions: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christianity. The government does not recognise any groups outside these five officially recognised religions (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2018).

According to the Constitution, His Majesty the King practises Buddhism but describes himself as the "Upholder of religions" implying that religions beyond Buddhism are also recognised by the head of the State. Freedom of religion is guaranteed for all Thai people (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2018; Tonsakulrungruang, 2018; The Royal Thai Government Gazette, 2017).

2.1.1 Freedom of Religion

The Royal Thai Government Gazette (1997, 2007) declared that the 1997 Constitution (section 38) and the 2007 Constitution (section 37), protected freedom of religion with the same words and sentences:

A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, a religious sect or creed, and observe religious precepts or exercise a form of worship in accordance with his or her belief; provided that it is not contrary to his or her civic duties, public order or good morals (p.8, p.10).

The Royal Thai Government Gazette (2017) promulgated the current 2017 Constitution.

Chapter 3 section 31, on Rights and Liberties of the Thai People declares:

A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion and shall enjoy the liberty to exercise or practice a form of worship in accordance with his or her religious principles, provided that it shall not be adverse to the duties of all Thai people, neither shall it endanger the safety of the State, nor shall it be contrary to public order or good morals (p.9.)

The 2017 Constitution carried over provisions from the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions, stating that all individuals are equal before the law and allowing them to profess, observe, and practice any religion of their choice. But for the first time, the phrase 'the safety of the State' was added to section 31, and the conflation of the protection of Buddhism and the "safety of the state" was implied in other parts of the Constitution (see section 67).

For example, “The state shall protect Buddhism and other religions” and “The state.... shall have measures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism from being undermined in any form”.

The new provision was a declaration that the concept of freedom of religion should not jeopardise ‘the safety of the State’. The Royal Thai Government set up measures and mechanisms to protect ‘the safety of the State’ from all forms of threat, including those arising from religious issues (United States Department of State, 2016). This reflects a response to the separatist insurgency in southern Thailand, where more than 6,500 people were killed between 2004-2015 (Jitpiromsri, 2017).

Tonsakulrungruang (2016) stressed that the draft Constitution had recognised religious freedom for people of all faiths, but that the responsibility of the State had dramatically changed in the promulgated constitution of 2017.

Instead of promoting religious understanding and harmony between Buddhists and those of other faiths as mentioned in the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions, the 2017 Constitution requires the government to safeguard and protect Theravada Buddhism from all forms of threat. Others suggested the 2017 Constitution supports efforts to raise ‘Buddhism’ to be superior to other religions (Kulabkaew, 2019; Rojanaphruk, 2018).

Although the protection of freedom of religious expression remains, Affatato (2017) and Tonsakulrungruang (2018) hypothesized that the 2017 Constitution would erode and undermine religious coexistence and tolerance between and among people of differing faiths. They argue this has led to less tolerance and a more influential role, not only for radical Buddhist groups, but has also helped fuel extremists from other religious groups who feel insecure and uncomfortable with freedom of religion.

2.1.2 The Commitment to Protecting Religions

The full section 67 of the 2017 Constitution enacted on 6 April 2017 and printed in the Royal Thai Government Gazette (2017) states:

The State should support and protect Buddhism and other religions. In supporting and protecting Buddhism, which is the religion observed by the majority of Thai people for a long period of time, the State should promote and support education and dissemination of dharmic principles of Theravada Buddhism for the development of mind and wisdom development and shall have measures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism from being undermined in any form. The State should also encourage Buddhists to participate in implementing such measures or mechanisms. (p.17)

The Constitution also continues to maintain that the State will patronise and protect Buddhism as well as other religions, but there is a new idea added; a mandate for the special protection of Theravada Buddhism by supporting education, dissemination of its principles, and the establishment of measures and mechanisms to prevent the desecration of Buddhism in any form.

The traditional language in previous Constitutions, called for religious harmony and understanding (Rojanaphruk, 2018).

Palatino (2016) from the Diplomat News Agency argued that it was clear in the draft that the State could logically suppress all forms of actions interpreted as a threat to Theravada Buddhism or as a desecration of Buddha's teachings.

Tonsakulrungruang (2018) a researcher at University of Bristol, United Kingdom, raised concerns about a narrow interpretation of the Constitution which protects only Buddhism rather than all religions and beliefs in Thailand.

During the referendum on the draft Constitution on August 7, 2016, I was in Pattani province, a southern province near the Malaysian border, where the majority of people are ethnic Malay Muslims. I observed that many Malay Muslims were uncomfortable about the draft on religious issues and voted against it. In the north and northeast Isan

region many people also voted against the constitution, and, in effect, the military government (Head, 2016).

The military government realised the results of the referendum meant there was a high risk of increasing discontent among Muslims in the southernmost provinces. Referendum results also saw Buddhist movements, like the Assembly of Buddhists for National Security particularly in the Isan region, protesting about mosque building in Khon Kaen, Sakon Nakhon and in the Nan province in the north.

These protestors were concerned that both the Isan and northern regions would become like the southernmost provinces, with conflicts and violence between Muslims and the Thai army. A Thai monk called for mosques to be destroyed in revenge for Buddhist deaths in the southernmost region (Rojanaphruk, 2017).

After the referendum, on 22 August 2016, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-Cha announced that, under section 44 of the interim Constitution, the State "protects all recognised religions and supports the constructive role of all faiths to contribute their values to the development and reform of the nation without violating the law and principles of national unity".

This statement indicated that social and religious harmony would be promoted and protected by the ultimate efforts of the government (Affatato, 2017; Office of International Religious Freedom, 2018; Rojanaphruk, 2018).

2.1.3 State Measures and Mechanisms to Protect Religions

Under the Article 49/2016 order, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha, as Chief of NCPO, officially ordered government agencies to fully support correct religious teachings and studies and patronise all recognised religions acknowledged by both the state and Thai people (Affatato, 2017; Kulabkaew, 2019).

With the measures and mechanisms to support and protect "other religions" mentioned in section 67 of the Constitution, the government could enable, patronise, and defend all recognised religions, and support the constructive role of people of all faiths to contribute their values to the development and reform of the nation.

There are constructive roles for all recognised faith communities in developing the country for its national unity, reforms, and prosperity, which are not against the law or religious practices (Palatino, 2016). However, policy proposals to implement Article 49/2016 were to be put in place to prevent any effort to undermine Theravada Buddhism, specifically identified, as well as "other religions". These were to be directly proposed to the cabinet within three months for approval by relevant authorities (United States Department of State, 2016).

2.1.4 The Space for Faith Communities

There has been no progress under Article 49/2016. There is, to date, no leadership, no State agency, no resourcing, and little interest at the government level. This has opened space for policy needs to be more directly addressed between people of faith and faith communities at the local level, as part of Thailand's development and reform. These particular circumstances have significantly encouraged faith communities at the local level to think about religious tolerance and harmonious coexistence as part of community development policy and practice.

Local government may also be mobilised to work closely with faith communities to strengthen and enhance an atmosphere of religious harmony and understanding. Governments alone cannot solve tensions and problems caused by faith or religious matters. The active participation of faith communities is both crucial and relevant to the nation's development and its public policy environment.

2.2 The Influence of Faith Values on the Public Policy Environment of Community Development

UNDP (2014) states “Faith matters to people, and also to development” (p.3). Encouraging the engagement of civil society in development, the UN has welcomed faith-based organisations and religious leaders to be engaged in both political and public spheres, along with their followers in civil society.

The presence of faith-based organisations in communities, and their capability to offer services and deal with problems at a local level, allows them to mobilise people on the ground, which can effectively make them key players in development policy and practice (UNDP, 2014).

The Pew Research Center (2015) claimed that 80 percent out of the 7.4 billion world population adhere to a religion. Christians make up 31 percent, Muslim's 24 percent, Hindu's 15 percent, Buddhist's seven percent. Adherents of folk religions, Judaism and members of other religions or faiths make up smaller shares. Sixteen percent have no religion. Thus, faith communities represent a potential force for transformation and change. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has long recognized the importance of religion and faith to the global economy, politics, society, and individuals, and is aware of the constructive role played by faith communities around the world in improving society in inclusive and sustainable development (Grim, 2015; Marshall & Saanen, 2007).

2.2.1 Faith Matters

Clugston and Holt (2012) raised the importance of faith values in the public policy environment of sustainable development:

Most people identify themselves as religious and/ or spiritual, and for many, their faiths call them to live in ways that respect and care for all life, present and future, and to focus on being more, not having more, after basic needs are met. In the context of the ongoing global dialogues on sustainable development and education for sustainable development, religious and spiritual communities can play a critical role in advancing a strong framework

for sustainable development that includes the spiritual dimension of life, and that contributes examples of educating for sustainable living. (p.4)

Religion, spirituality, and faith have often been absent, neglected and marginalized in development policies and practices, but Lunn (2009) sees them as having a constructive role to play in the future of development policy and practice, mainly in supporting the public policy environment of development at all levels. Lunn (2009) and Brennan (n.d.) argue distinction needs to be clearly made between religion, faith, and spirituality, as, although they are commonly used interchangeably, they have substantial differences. Lunn (2009) wrote:

Religion is often the source of spirituality but not all religious people are necessarily spiritual, just as not all spiritual people are necessarily religious. I use the terms as follows: religion as an institutionalised system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural realm; spirituality as the personal beliefs by which an individual relates to and experiences the supernatural realm; and faith as the human trust or belief in a transcendent reality (although the word faith is also applied in non-religious contexts). (pp.937-938)

Chile and Simpson (2004) argued that:

Religion and spirituality are not synonymous. Religion is only one of the ways through which spirituality finds expression. It is a faith-based institution through which belief systems and practices become recognizable in particular practice traditions. Spirituality, on the other hand, is the inner self that defines who we are. It is developed and expressed in many ways outside of religion. Spirituality pre-dates organized religion. Religions that developed around them (spirituality) were a response to their spiritual wisdom and a means of connecting their followers to a common faith based on their ideas and practices. (p.319)

The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) defined "Faith" as "great trust or confidence in something or someone", "Religion" as "the belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship" and "spirituality" as "the quality that involves deep feelings and beliefs of a religious nature, rather than the physical parts of life".

Brennan (n.d.) saw "religion" as about something which is a God-centred approach as recognised by religious authorities. Faith is a response in spiritual and religious people. In the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, Blackburn (2005) defined "faith" as "the conviction of the truth of some doctrine which is the result of a voluntary act of will" (p.130). Also, Hull (1998) concluded: "Religion is the instrument; spirituality is the goal; faith is the attitude of trust that the instrument will lead to the goal" (p.8).

In this research, I consider the inter-relationship between "belief" and "faith" is that "faith" requires "belief" in the initial state of being faithful persons, but "Faith" points to a religious practice reality deeper than "belief". People can have a "belief" in God or a higher power, but that does not mean that they follow God's commands or devotion practices (Marti, 1946). For instance, a Muslim person could have belief in God, but is not faithful in the sense of going to pray at mosques, or, fasting in Ramadan, or performing Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina) once in a lifetime. In my view, a person of faith, primarily believes in God and also follows His doctrines, principles, and devotion practices. Therefore, he/she is willing to follow and engage with all His commands to be a faithful person for His pleasure. Thus, I intend to focus on the importance of faith, instead of religion, belief, and spirituality in my study. I will use "faith" as the fundamental attitude that can bring people together for community development, with belief and trust at the community level (Dinham, 2009). In this research, I use Muslim and Buddhist faiths as the fundamental attitudes that bring the people in my study together in their community.

2.2.2 The Significance of Faith Community

Hussain (2012) studied the connection between faith and public policy in a modern British context. He argued that more attention should be paid to faith communities in relation to their potential role in policy development given their engagement with issues of social and public concern.

Such issues may encompass identity, media representation, inequality, poverty, integration, housing, policing, health, citizenship and extremism in faith communities, and the Muslim community in particular. In any public policy framework, he suggests that it is imperative to understand that faith matters (Hussain, 2012).

In 2010, Dinham asked, "what is a faith community?" and notes that faith communities as public actors play a constructive role in many Western societies. In the United Kingdom, for instance, public policy recognises faith as "repositories of resources for the strengthened community" (p.526). Faith is seen as a vital resource community domain for the public policy environment, particularly when policy development is connected to the provision of social welfare and services.

Faith can encourage participative neighbourhood engagement and community cohesion, and community development that values understanding other faith communities (Dinham, 2010, 2012; Hussain, 2012; Lekmit & Treesap; 2020 ; Phoborisut, 2008).

The UK Working Together Report: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities (Home Office Faith Communities Unit, 2004) encouraged engagement between the two. Faith communities are gateways to access vast resources of energy and commitment of their members and can be a tremendous opportunity in the development of civil society (Dinham, 2009).

The idea of a faith community is still controversial, but for many people, a community means they can live together with other faiths. In their article entitled "Religion and urban regeneration: a place for faith?" Furbey and Macey (2005) found that faith communities had been a neglected resource in local areas and that engagement with faith communities could be a way of recognising the diversity of people who could be involved in the policy process.

In the UK, the Local Government Association (LGA) (2002) studied the characteristics of faith communities, and identified that:

Existing substantial involvement in their neighbourhoods and communities; local networks, leadership, management capacity and buildings to contribute to regeneration; memberships that include 'hard-to-reach' people with whom official regeneration initiatives are not connecting; and a particular willingness of members to volunteer. (pp. 7–10)

Moreover, they see faith communities can positively contribute to good health, as providers of health care, through citizenship and community development, voices for social justice, and as focal points for connecting with people in economic, social and political governance positions (LGA, 2002).

2.2.3 Engaging Faith Communities in Public Policy

On the relationship between faith communities and public policy, Farnell et al. (2003) argued that "the participation of faith communities and their representatives in secular policy is controversial" (p.2). For example, there have been debates around State funding for faith schools and other programmes that involve government support.

A vision of faith communities' role as a positive force for social cohesion and progressive social change, has also seen commentary on potential harmful and threatening impacts.

Marshall (2005) raised concerns about how faith could also be an obstacle in development policy and practice, and how faiths and religions can be divisive. The relationship between politics and religions can be complicated and seen as dangerous if faiths or religious communities are considered to be working towards divisive or extremist agendas. These concerns can quickly lead to undermining relationships between faith communities and others in the public policy environment (Ampalavanac-Brown, 2013; Putthongchai, 2013).

Despite various governments recognition of the vital role that faith communities can play in community development and improvement, there has been a less widespread recognition of the constructive role that faith communities can play in local communities,

and reluctance to involve faith communities in development and reform agendas. However, there is a general recognition that faith communities are moral places, from which people can comfortably participate in the public policy process (Clugston & Holt, 2012; Farnell et al., 2003).

In conclusion, some consider that faith communities with public policy concerns need to move beyond parochial concerns to matters of public life and joint community issues, where both government and other sectors involved work together to develop future partnerships and broader issues of policy and practice (Clugston & Holt, 2012; Hussain, 2012).

2.3 Concepts of Community Development

Humans have always naturally been engaged in community development as they struggle to seek ways to acclimate to the environment and create opportunities for social relations, power and decision-making (Garkovich, 2011).

Communities, as human settlements, are a continuing focus of public policy and citizen action around the world (Shaw & Mayo, 2016). At the same time, globalisation itself provides both challenges and opportunities for communities in both rural and urban areas. Communities can use their potential and capacities to make sure that the supports and resources that they have, can respond to those community development challenges and opportunities (Kihl, 2015).

Kenny (2006) stated that community development provides a profound foundation for organising how to inform, encourage, educate, train, and empower people to have collective management of their communities. Peoples' participation enables and strengthens a framework of new ideas, structures and designs by which communities can identify and address their needs and issues. It also offers new approaches to initiatives to deal with tremendous challenges like conflicts and disagreements in mutually respectful and productive ways within and between communities.

Chile (2007) wrote that defining community development is challenging because many tend to define it in a way which responds to their own objectives, purposes and contexts, Community development can also be described as both an academic discipline and a professional practice (Chile, 2007; Kenny, 2006).

Community development focuses on an optimistic commitment to the empowerment of people to take up alternative options and opportunities for their future. People involved in community development are often ordinary powerless people who have little control over decision-making, governance, and resource distribution in their communities. These voices typically do not reach the places where public policy is made. Women, the unemployed, people with disabilities, minority and ethnic groups are likely to be among those who gain from effective, bottom-up and participatory community development practices (Chile, 2007; Kenny, 2006).

Community development seeks to achieve policy outcomes/consequences and citizen participation benefits, including those related to religious tolerance and other issues such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion. (Howard & Wheeler, 2015; Lynam, 2006; Ojuah, 2012).

2.3.1 Enhancing a Bottom-Up Approach to Community Development

The bottom-up approach is key to community development practice. It focuses on the participation of local people in selecting their own developmental goals and making decisions on how those goals will be achieved. This means that people have a sense of community ownership of initiatives which they choose to progress. On the other hand, if development is planned and led by experts at the top there is less likelihood of citizen participation and commitment and sustainability (Kaiser & Steiner, 2012).

Brennan (n.d.) argued that the critical community development question is “Who has the right to identify the needs for people in need?” (p.2). The conventional top-down policy approach needs to move forward to a community approach, with a “bottom-up policy

approach” to gain “participation” and “engagement” towards community development and policy practice (Onyenemezu, 2014).

Participation is at the heart of community development in public policymaking. Lynam (2006) claimed that community development is focused on the participation of various groups such as marginalised people, in public policymaking. This participation has a tremendous impact on their lives and communities and on their collective capacity to resolve and manage their own problems. People at the grassroots genuinely understand their daily situation, better than others outside their communities. Thus, communities should be facilitated in harnessing their own expertise.

The challenge around getting citizens involved in public policy processes is central to debates about modernising governance and building a strong civil society. Advances in technologies have also created new ways in which citizens might get involved (Phillips & Orsini, 2002).

Citizen participation is not a simple route to achievement. Mukamunana and Brynard (2005) argued that there are some obstacles which can be obstructive to community and civil society involvement in public policymaking.

Firstly, government cultures that forcibly attempt to control all systems, all public services and activities and do not allow civil society to democratically participate in political activities, create a fearful atmosphere where people cannot speak out, or assemble peacefully (Kanchoochat & Hewison, 2016).

Secondly, where there is an atmosphere of mistrust and misunderstanding between peoples of different faith, ethnic and political backgrounds, civil society involvement in public policymaking can become highly fraught. For example, during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda both Hutus and Tutsis both mistrusted government because of their brutal involvement in that genocide (Mukamunana & Brynard, 2005). To recover any trust in situations like these, civil societies need an effective trust-building process within the

communities of hopelessness. Each individual needs to be part of the collective vision as people seek to find common ground for a better future.

Given challenging situations, bottom-up approaches need to find critical ways to establish themselves in the public policy environment of community development policy and practice (Stracca, 2013)

2.3.2 The Challenges for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the foundational definition is from the World Commission on Environment and Development Report (1987) "Our Common Future", also has known as the Brundtland Report:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. (p.43)

Baker (2016) defines sustainable development as:

The many processes and pathways to reconcile the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of life. This can include, for example, the promotion of sustainable agriculture and forestry, sustainable production and consumption, good government, research and technology transfer, education and training, recognition of cultural values and different forms of knowledge. (p.9)

Sustainable development is about understanding social change at the intersections of the social, related to human values, relationships and institutions; the economic, concerned with allocation and distribution of decent resources; and the ecological, and their impacts on environmental issues (Baker, 2016).

The challenge is how to balance these three factors in developing policy and practice frameworks involving people at all levels, particularly at the community level (DESA, 2011).

A dynamic understanding of sustainable development can assist practitioners, communities and policy makers to understand and foresee alternative futures for society, through social change, policy innovation, political transformation and economic restructuring (Baker, 2016; Howard & Wheeler, 2015).

SDGs were announced by the UN in 2015 (Sidibé, 2016; UN, 2015). The SDGs expect governments, the private sector, civil society, and faith communities within civil society, to create strong partnerships to address the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets (UN, 2015).

Howard and Wheeler (2015) argued that citizen participation in community development within this new sustainable development global framework is critical and this approach needs to be more widely understood. The SDGs need a bottom-up policy approach with civil society's active involvement (Chambers, 2012, 2014; Green, 2012).

There are examples of community development in public policymaking, which show that the values and principles of the community can dramatically change the process of a nation's development and public policy practice for a better quality of life. (Chambers, 2017; Chile, 2007).

In an example of faith-based community development from Thailand's Isan region, Choopug Suttisa's work focused on sustainable development when dealing with the issue of deforestation. She worked with people in the community to conserve the community forest around the Chi River by using their faith to protect the forest for future generations (Suttisa, 2005). A tree ordination ritual or "Buaed Pa" (p.175) to conserve the community forest was undertaken. Buddhist monks were invited to the area to pray in the ritual ceremony, performing and transferring the forest from the common to the divine. The villagers came to help wrap the biggest trees in the forest with yellow cords to mark their sanctity and denote the boundary of the community's temple. This ritual dignified the forest in a way which protected it from being cut down. By doing this, the people applied their faith and their local cultural values to preserve and conserve their community's forest (Suttisa, 2005).

The formulation of the SDGs has significance for citizen participation at all levels. Howard and Wheeler (2015) explained that the challenges for citizen participation within the development and application of the SDGs remain critical and problematic for three key reasons.

First, there is the issue of scale and the relationship between scale and citizen participation when dealing with change at a global level. A global policy framework requires a "homogenization of context" which can be problematic when it comes to policy implementation. People expect the government to do it.

Second, the challenges of attaining the legal representation of citizens in global public policy processes are well documented. The voices of the poorest and most marginalised must be heard at global policy level, but there are tremendous barriers to achieving this.

Third, citizen participation and community development have a place in a new global development framework which has become ever more critical and relevant to the public policy process. The space for citizen participation is mostly instrumental through the role of civil society (Baker, 2016; Howard & Wheeler (2015)).

2.3.3. The Future for Community Development

A significant challenge is to attract and retain younger generations to participate in and to think about sustainable community development. Several authors stress community development should pay more attention to promoting policy practice, which is directly concerned with social harmony and mutual understanding and interaction between people of different faiths and generations. It should play a constructive role in implementing community initiatives - social, economic, ecological, and educational - seriously directed to the inclusion of all groups, including youth (Baker, 2016; Chile, 2007; Vasoo, 2001).

A balanced approach to the social, ecological and economic dimensions of life for people living in all corners of society, has become the core substance of sustainable community development (Howard & Wheeler, 2015; Sidibé, 2016).

2.4 The Geographical and Faith-Based Community Context in Which the Research is Grounded

This research explores the role of the Al-Mubarak Muslim community in community development in a peri-urban village in Udon Thani Province, a northern province in Thailand's Isan region.

2.4.1 The Isan Region

Isan, Northeastern Thailand, is the largest region in Thailand. Buddhists make up the majority of the population with Muslims a small minority. Isan is one of the most diverse regions in the country in terms of politics, religions, faiths and cultures. Most people practise Theravada Buddhism, although this is combined with animism. Big cities like Sakan Nakhon, Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Sakhon and Nakhon Ratchasima have Christian churches. The Isan Muslim minority have lived harmoniously with their majority Buddhist neighbours since 1900 (J.Sohsan, 2010; Prapertchop, 1984, 1993, 2001; I.Sohsan, 2014). In recent decades the Thai Government has put great, though belated, effort into development in the Isan region, addressing its basic problems of poverty and other development issues. Although Isan poverty is still a problem, it has been alleviated to a certain extent (Lao et al., 2019; Phongpaichit & Baker, 2015).

2.4.2 Udon Thani Province's Development Context

Udon Thani is one of the four largest provinces in Northeast Thailand's Isan region alongside Nakhon Ratchasima, Ubon Ratchathani and Khon Kaen. The city of Udon Thani is increasing as a significant government and commercial "hub" and growth centre and a gateway for Thailand in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) neighbours, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia Vietnam, and China (ADB, n.d).

The city's economic growth has been boosted by its proximity to the Royal Thai Air Force Base which has been located there since the Vietnam War. It retains reminders of being a US base in the form of bars, coffee shops, and hotels (Jablon, 2017).

Udon Thani is a city of diverse ethnicities including Tai Lao, Phutai, Tai Yuen, Iranian, Malay, Thai, Pathan, Burmese, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Chinese (The Udon Thani Provincial Office, 2017).

2.4.3 Al-Mubarak Muslim Community

The Al-Mubarak Muslim community is located in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village, Mueang District, in a peri-urban zone about 11 kilometres south of Udon Thani City.

The community was established as a pilot project for Muslim community models in the Isan region in 2004, because Isan was identified as one of Thailand's more pluralistic regions. In Isan Muslims had been actively involved with Buddhist neighbours in community affairs and activities along with local government, the private sector and other civil society organisations carrying out humanitarian, charitable and development works

From the outset Al-Mubarak Community's founders, such as Kru Haroon Samadeh, the first Imam, and Dr Preeda, President of the FEDMIN, actively sought to build a sense of citizenship among its members. Dr Preeda remarks, "Isan Muslims who are willing and ready to engage with others and are keen to be moderate and open minded, in fact, they wanted to be more prosperous and looking for the future for their children"

FEDMIN Foundation was established in 1997. It was the first Muslim organisation in the Isan region, a focus for Isan Muslim activists working for Muslim communities in the area focusing on both education and development (I.Sohsan, 2014). A building to house the FEDMIN headquarters was constructed in Al-Mubarak Community as the community developed. The Santitham Wittaya School (SWT School) located in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village, the only Muslim inter-faith school in the Isan region, was established in 2007 and is owned by the FEDMIN.

The SWT school, the only school in the village, is a safe space for all faith-believers and plays a role as a bridge between this Muslim community and others. In addition to its home village, it also draws enrolments from neighbouring villages and even from Udon Thani City itself. The school roll of 200 students, is 85 percent Buddhist, only 10 percent Muslim and five percent Christian. The teaching staff has a similar proportional composition; over 80 percent of teachers are non-Muslim, from Buddhist or Christian backgrounds. The school follows the Thai government curriculum and religious classes for Muslim students are held after regular school hours. The school senior management is predominantly Muslim, and the school board is multi-faith with parent, teacher and local government representatives all Buddhist, plus 3 representatives from FEDMIN.

The community now attracts field trip study visits by government agencies. They often bring community and religious leaders, particularly from the southern region where Muslims are the majority, to learn about this multicultural society in Isan. Most importantly, converted Muslims, most of whom are women, have played a very significant role as a link between Muslim and Buddhist neighbours and supporting community development, because they used to be Buddhists before their marriage to Muslim men.

Udon Thani Province is rapidly becoming an economic and commercial hub, not only in this region, but also for neighbouring countries in The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). The Al-Mubarak Community is now having to face the potential social, community and environmental impact challenges, associated with these kinds of developments. Given this, how sustainable are Muslim faith values in the public policy environment of community development? The challenges and opportunities for using faith values in community development in the Udon Thani province, include how the community can attract and retain younger generations to participate in, and take up leadership roles in, sustainable community development?

2.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the four concepts relevant to the study; Thailand's constitutional commitment to protect Buddhism and other religions, the influence of faith values in the public policy environment of community development, concepts of community development, and the geographical and faith-based context in the Isan region. It identified that faith communities have been absent from the community development public policy and practice nexus. These four concepts underpin this qualitative research into the community development process of a minority Muslim community and their Buddhist neighbours in Udon Thani Province, Isan region, Thailand.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodological framework which guides this qualitative research, focusing on Participatory Action Research (PAR). The chapter considers the design of qualitative research, PAR as a methodological approach, the practice of PAR in the field, PAR processes in sustainable community development, and some illustrative PAR case studies in Thailand and the Isan region in particular.

3.1 The Design of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena via people's lived experiences, their personal values, beliefs, and experiences, and uses this data to investigate and increase understanding of aspects of their social world (Silverman, 2021; Waller et al., 2016). Qualitative research has long been involved in solving problems in daily living and draws data from different contexts as they occur (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schubotz, 2020). It attempts to understand social process meanings from the perspectives of those participating in those different daily living spaces and environments (Gorman & Clayton, 2005; Leavy, 2017; Steinberg & Cannella, 2012).

The process of qualitative research involves developing research questions, data collection in participants' natural settings, research fieldwork, inductive data analysis, building from the particular to general themes and researchers using critical interpretation to derive meaning from the data (Silverman, 2021). The objective of qualitative methodology is to describe and understand complex issues and gain new insights from participants' own perspectives rather than to predict and control.

There is no one standard qualitative research approach, but there are many methods, tools, and strategies that can help researchers define qualitative research as social research in which people's values, ideas and experiences are the subject of inquiry (Babbie, 2021; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Scheyvens, 2014).

3.2 PAR as a People-Oriented Action Research Methodology

PAR is an interactive qualitative research methodology where researchers and participants partner on social action projects to collaboratively develop the purpose, social action and evaluation processes of the study (Babbie, 2021; Hennink et al., 2020; Schubotz, 2020). It's collaborative, participatory worldview enables close community and researcher engagement through all stages of the research process, and shared understanding and action on community/social issues of value to the participants (Baum et al., 2006; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). PAR approaches now have wide application in community and social projects such as agricultural development (Ciaccia et al., 2019), community health (Sena et al., 2018), health care services development (Nilvarangkul, Arphorn et al., 2016), local government (Auriacombe & Sithomola, 2020), community conflict (Daenseekaew et al., 2012), and education (Visser & Kreemers, 2020; Wright, 2021), for example.

PAR is a significant branch of action research and is one of the original collaborative approaches. Dawson (2019) describes it as a methodology where the researchers have to work closely in collaboration with various groups of people or participants to improve their situations, phenomena and environment in a particular social setting.

There is a sense of community in which a group of people come together to do work. The researcher, however, does not conduct such research on or for people but instead works with them as a facilitator or consultant. People-oriented action research begins with a process of communication and agreement between and among people who are likely to be willing to engage together in making change (Babbie, 2021; McNiff, 2017).

In PAR, participants are recognised as experts in the field and play a vital role in the whole research process, as co-researchers alongside academic or professional researchers (Schubotz, 2020). PAR can be defined as a mixture of both approaches and methods, in which people are facilitated to do things themselves (Schubotz, 2020). What

they do might be questioning, evaluation, research, analysis, action, planning, implementation, monitoring, meeting, or other programmes and activities.

In community development studies, Hennink et al. (2020) describe PAR as having two outstanding characteristics: first, the participation of community members as partners in the entire qualitative research process, and secondly, a commitment to action for social change. Not all people in the community will be prepared and ready to be part of the action research, but active and dedicated people tend to participate, opening up new ideas and perspectives which reflect their social setting (Debbink & Ornelas, 1997; McNiff, 2017).

PAR is a research process that can help build spaces for the empowerment and engagement of individuals, groups, communities and even the researchers participating in the process. Most importantly, the PAR process can also build trust between the researcher and the partner community (Chambers, 2017; Chile, 2007; Silverman, 2021).

The primary purpose of PAR is to use the research process to change and improve the situations of the community members or research participants. Traditionally, academic or professional researchers worked with disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised communities with the goal of achieving development and positive change for those communities. The scope and subjects of PAR include areas such as health care, culture, education, poverty, agriculture, housing, domestic violence, child abuse, gender inequality, immigration and more recently, climate change, environmental issues, and sustainable development. Ecological issues affect disadvantaged communities across the globe. PAR is therefore characterised by not only addressing the particular concerns of communities involved in the study but may also inform knowledge of the fundamental causes and solutions to problems which are barriers to the achievement of social change globally (Babbie, 2021; Chambers, 2017; Chile, 2007; Hennink et al., 2020; Neupane, 2017; Schubotz, 2020; Silverman, 2021).

PAR as a methodological approach evolves around three main ontological and epistemological principles: recognising that ordinary people become co-researchers and are not simply the subjects of the study; acknowledging PAR is about a bottom-up approach not just the hierarchical power relations which may be embedded in a conventional research approach; and enabling transformative oriented change in social settings, which may transform the lives of people and the communities in which they live (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Schubotz, 2020).

PAR may therefore mean a more protracted research process because it is about bringing people to action for critical transformation on both individual and community levels. With its core value of social change, PAR can effectively help investigate the circumstances, reflect on the needs of diverse peoples and their community realities and examine paths to new directions in social life (Babbie, 2021; Scheyvens, 2014; Willms, 1997).

In my study, PAR's three ontological and epistemological underpinnings mentioned above, will provide opportunities for these faith-based community members to become co-researchers and co-creators of the research process to truly reflect their experiences of the rich history and complexity of Al-Mubarak Community's development. This bottom-up approach allows the community members to fully contribute their own wisdom and knowledge to potential inter-generational transformative change in their community.

3.3 The Practice of PAR in the Field

PAR researchers use a wide range of qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, transect walks, ecological mapping and storytelling as they partner to build up shared understandings and clarification of research issues and questions important to the participants (McIntyre, 2008). The decision to use different qualitative methods is primarily guided by the research questions and the purpose of the study (Hennink et al., 2020). However, PAR

differs in that the community or field is more involved in the actual collection of research data. PAR includes community workshops or meetings where interactions take place between the researcher and the community, creating and co-constructing new knowledge. The researcher plays a key facilitator and co-creator role for community dialogue in the fieldwork (Hennink et al., 2020; Schubotz, 2020).

In working with people, I needed to observe their daily lives, events, activities in the community and also ask them questions. I would create an environment for people to raise and address matters that are important and relevant to them (Dawson, 2019; Heron & Reason, 2006). PAR research challenges the notion that authority and legitimate knowledge and power only lie with experts, academics, elites and their dominant knowledge. Instead, PAR asserts that knowledge can be developed in collaboration with local wisdom and experiences and the voices of people at the community level (Babbie, 2021; Park, 2006; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Silverman, 2021; Smith, 1997).

PAR is also applied to support social transformation and enhance the promotion of human rights in developing countries and in diverse contexts. For this reason, PAR is a good methodological choice for Thailand and the Isan region (Hennink et al., 2020; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Schubotz, 2020).

In PAR, the communities or fields are integral parts of the research process as they generate their theory of practice. The PAR process in community development requires both participants and researchers to play the constructive role of a catalyst in the research process (Hennink et al., 2020; Schubotz, 2020; Velasco, 2019).

My goal in this research is to use PAR to work closely with people in the community to 1) better understand the context and environment of their community development; 2) create new ideas and ways of looking at things differently; 3) learn how to act to change things that participants would want to change; and 4) find out how to do things better in the community setting. As an individual who engages in PAR. I must live, walk, work and be with people. I must also learn with them a deeper understanding of the context and

reality of their everyday lives in community development processes and practices (Debbink & Ornelas, 1997; Scheyvens, 2014; Schubotz, 2020; Silverman, 2021).

3.4 PAR Process in Sustainable Community Development

Keahey (2021) researched the systematic relationship between PAR and sustainable development and found that many sustainable development scholars are now employing PAR for collaborative inquiry and knowledge integration. PAR provides the means to establish transformative frameworks of engagement for sustainable development. At the same time, PAR in sustainable community development is being challenged in a world that appreciates speed and detachment. Consultation takes too long, for example, and holds up development programmes. More sustainable ways of living cannot be realised without considering the influence of cultural values and human relationships (Horlings, 2015).

However, it is also essential to highlight a PAR benefit: that frequently groups working with PAR change the anticipated consequences of the research because of the reflection process in which PAR is grounded. They might find out that what was viewed as the main problem is just the result of some other issue that needs to be undertaken first (Velasco, 2019).

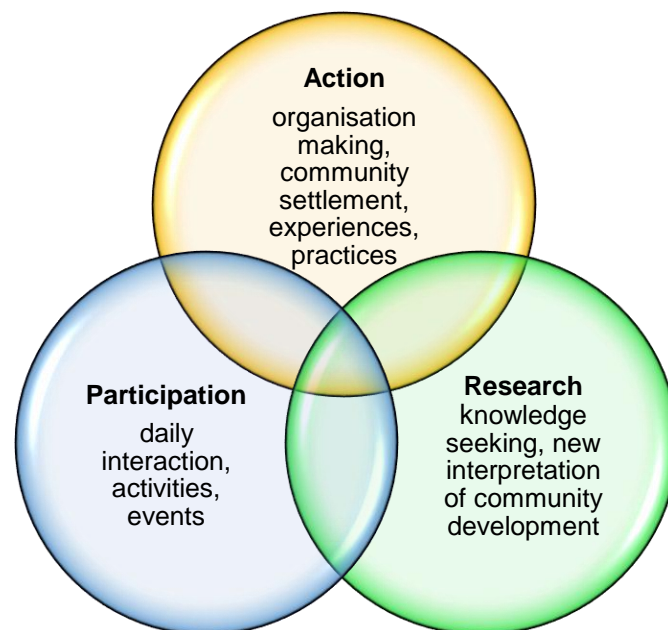
The PAR process is suitable for systematically examining issues from the perspectives and experiences of the community members most affected by those issues. PAR involves focusing on the agenda of participants, using self-reflective cycles, developing shared criteria to ensure validity and generating knowledge and understanding the community context (McIntyre, 2008; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Reason and Bradbury (2008) explain that PAR allows the use of a variety of data collection methods to help participants cooperate in the flexible process of PAR (Schubotz, 2020).

My use of PAR involves working alongside research participants in the community to help them decide on topics that concern them about community development and public policy. Any action plans that they take on will be a result of research questions based on their priority issues arising from the research process (Hennink et al., 2020; McIntyre, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2006, 2008).

PAR research has three main elements, namely action, research, and participation. Chevalier and Buckles (2019) illustrate this with a basic Venn diagram. Figure 4 for PAR Connection for Sustainable Development for Al-Mubarak Community.

Figure 4

PAR Connection for Sustainable Development for Al-Mubarak Community



*Note. **Participation:** daily interaction, activities, events, **Action:** organisation making, community settlement, experiences, practices, **Research:** knowledge seeking, new interpretation of community development. Adapted from *Participatory action research: theory and methods for engaged inquiry*, (2nd ed., p.21), J.M. Chevalier and D.J.*

Buckles, 2019, Routledge. Copyright 2019 by Taylor & Francis Group

My research aims to bring people of different faiths together in their community to think and develop their future in community development policy and practice as part of creating a better collective awareness of community development in Udon Thani province. The PAR process for this sustainable community development research will be divided into the following four iterative phases:

Phase 1: Developing Shared Understanding of Community Development Issues and Priorities in the Al-Mubarak Muslim Community

This phase involves the researcher and community members engaging to develop collaborative relationships to sustain the research process, discussing and sharing knowledge and perspectives on the community and its history, and scoping out and establishing the project's particular focal research questions of concern and valued by the community.

Critical researcher elements in this phase will include self-reflective inquiry practice on their role and responsibility in the research, developing authentic co-researcher relationships with the community participants, sharing knowledge and understanding of PAR and community development processes and co-development of quality criteria for systems to ensure research validity (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The researcher is a member of the community and must guard against presumptions that he already knows what is important in the community. However, it is important to disclose that I entered the research field with the first research question already established in my thesis proposal. I did not consult or collaborate with respect to this.

I did engage with formal and informal community leaders, community groups and a wide range of individual community members to explore actions, perspectives, experiences and jointly explore appropriate directions for community development while reflecting on the research process and practice as well (Hennink et al., 2020; Schubotz, 2020).

Phase 2: Co-Creating Action Plans

This phase involves the researcher and community participants developing action plans based on their phase 1 shared understanding and agreement on priority issues (research questions) facing their community. They will develop strategies and goals for working on their priority issues and organise community resources and material needed for taking action. Methods may include community meetings, brainstorming tasks, training workshops, and so on. Community members such as women, youth, teachers, FEDMIN members, mosque community leaders and members, local leaders and Buddhist neighbours may be engaged depending on what plans are developed. Development of action plans will also be a constructive community development learning process for those involved in the PAR process.

Phase 3: Implementing Action Plans

This phase involves implementing the action plans, putting into place the strategies and activities stemming from the action planning phase above. This will require the researcher to support and co-monitor these activities and their progress, this will need continuous reflection on the organisation and process of the plans being implemented; for example, are there management issues that need addressing, is there need for extra training, is extra support needed, do the goals need adjusting and tweaking given changing circumstances, and so on.

Phase 4: Evaluation and Reflection on Actions Taken

This phase involves the researcher and participants co-evaluating both the process and outcomes of the action plan implementation phase. It requires reflecting on how the plans were implemented and have they met their goals. Did any organisational/management issues arise that need refining for the project to continue. It requires critical reflection for both researcher and participants and adjustments made to the plans and revisions as required. It is important to also reflect on unexpected outcomes, both positive and negative, and new priorities that may have arisen and adjusting to these as well.

As this thesis will demonstrate, only phases 1 and 2 have been completed, and the final PAR phases will be completed on my return to Thailand. The travel restrictions of the COVID pandemic meant I was unable to complete these phases as planned, as I was unable to return from New Zealand to Thailand for the two years 2020-2021.

Prior to resuming the PAR phases 3 and 4 respectively, I will also need to review phases 1 and 2 that have been completed. This is because phase 1 and 2 data collection phases were completed three years ago (2019) and there have been ongoing social, economic (e.g., covid impacts) and political developments in Thailand since then. For example, the 2020-2021 Thai anti-government protests organised under the Free Youth umbrella, the arrival of new migrants into Al-Mubarak community and the operation of Udon Thani Industrial Estate close to the community, all of which may influence community members' current perspectives. Therefore, the research participants and I will need to re-consider the shared understandings for priority community development issues from 2019 for Al-Mubarak Muslim Community. I will review the 2019 data with selected research participants and complete some new interviews, a focus group with younger women (unavailable earlier), and carry out transect walks with some Buddhist neighbours to ensure that data is up to date for co-creating action plans, strategies and goals for working on Al-Mubarak Community's current development priorities.

3.5 Case Studies of PAR Methodological Research in Thailand

There are many PAR studies in Thailand in a range of community and public policy settings with both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. One example is a study focussed on CBAT in Bangplakod Sub-district, Nakhonnayok Province. The process used community observation, community gatherings, network building and workshops used to enhance community participation. During the PAR process, the Bangplakod CBAT project was developed to empower local decision making in managing local tourism. Qualitative data analysis was carried out by content analysis and verified by triangulation (Srithong et al., 2019).

In a research study, “Implementing PAR in a Thai community development context: Engaging a culturally responsive approach”, Doungphummes and Vicars (2020) reflect on the use of PAR with and in Thai rural communities. PAR afforded researchers an opportunity to better understand how research practice is learned and developed as a result of day-to-day work within these contexts. Their study discusses the methodological implications of implementing a culturally responsive approach.

Peerapun (2018) used PAR to investigate urban conservation and regeneration in Amphawa Community, Amphawa District of Samut Songkhram Province, at the north-western tip of the Bay of Bangkok. Peerapun and his research team demonstrated that urban conservation and regeneration planning in Amphawa Community was unique in its planning methodology. Peerapun (2018) says:

The PAR approach enables the planner to add new issues into the new planning cycles quickly and easily. Five phases of the action research cycle include diagnosing, planning, action, evaluation and reflection. A stakeholder analysis framework that incorporates five levels of public participation is employed to identify and analyse stakeholders into groups according to the level of participation. The analysis is verified regularly, especially at the beginning of a new project. Accordingly, a list of corresponding participation techniques is produced and verified.

Sirasirirusth et al. (2018) conducted a research project entitled “Participatory Action Research with Stakeholders for Creating Value Added Innovations towards Dhamma and Merit-Making Tourism and Event Marketing of Temple Destinations in Ayutthaya Province”. This was a good example of applying faith-driven PAR in a Thai community. The 33 key informants included seven government officers, ten scholars/liaison/community members/tourists, and 16 Buddhist abbots (Dhamma practitioners). The temples in this study were categorised into two groups consisting of 1) Merit-making temples (Wat Yai Chaimongkol, Wat Phananchong, Wat Tha Ka Rong, and Wat Na Phra Men) (2) Dhamma practice temples (Wat Mahaeyong and Wat Tarn Ain).

Adulyarat et al. (2016) wrote an article entitled “Development of a Culturally-Based Care Model for Muslim Mothers in a Rural Community in Southern Thailand”, which employed community-based participatory research to develop a culturally based care model for Muslim mothers. The study comprised three groups of participants: 26 Muslim mothers and 17 of their husbands, 14 community and religious leaders, and 14 healthcare providers, including village health volunteers and traditional birth attendants. Data was collected through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and participatory observations and analysed using content analysis.

3.6 PAR Case Studies in The Isan Region

Good examples of PAR research can be found in the Isan region. For example, the work of Suttisa (2005) focused on sustainable development in connection with the issue of deforestation. This research involved critical case studies and PAR and the methods used. were in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.

In a case study of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) based community development, Wech-O-Satsakda (2008) found through the PAR process that rural communities in the Isan region realised that ICTs could meet their needs. ICT learning activities using a hands-on practical approach motivated participants to adapt and integrate ICT in their daily life. They applied their experiences to acquire new knowledge and technology. This study used interviews, observations and workshops, and study trips were undertaken for additional data collection.

Somnuek (2010) studied the development of community-based tourism business in Phu Khratae Island, Nonklang Sub-district, Phiboonmangsaharn District, Ubonratchathani Province, in the Isan region. PAR data collection was done through questionnaires, documents, interviews and observation, which were later analysed by using summarisation together with descriptive and inferential statistical measurements.

Respondents in this study consisted of representatives and senior members of the community, the committee of the community tourism association, and tourists.

In a case study of a community business network, Chantarasombat (2011) used the PAR process for developing a community enterprise consultant network for the Isan region. The study demonstrated that 80 percent of the participating 54 community enterprise consultants in the region lacked educational and community analysis skills before the training.

In the health research area, Jongudomkarn (2014) conducted a study “A Volunteer Alcohol Consumption Reduction Campaign: Participatory Action Research among Thai Women in the Isaan Region”. During in-depth interviews with 10 female volunteer participants, the following themes emerged: merit making, developing a sense of personal empowerment, and the experience of participating in an action plan that utilises various strategies.

A series of Isan community/rural health related PAR projects has engaged with communities on health issues with women weavers, (Nilvarangkul et al., 2013), with rubber farmers (Sena et al., 2018), and strengthening primary care services for informal sector workers (Nilvarangkul, Phajan et al., 2016; Nilvarangkul, Arphorn et al., 2016).

Previous studies have shown that the PAR methodology has increasingly been recognised in various fields of research in Thailand. Most importantly, PAR and the role of faith-based community development in community development and public policy-making processes remains critical, particularly in Muslim community development in the region. To my knowledge, this will be the first PAR research on community development conducted with the minority Muslim community in the Isan region.

3.7 Summary

In Thailand and particularly the Isan region, the relevance and application of PAR in qualitative social research remains critical. The use of PAR in faith-based community development settings requires more studies because people of different faiths live in the same social contexts and faith as a critical factor has become a significant phenomenon in the multicultural world. The adaptation of PAR for work with faith communities is essential. In the next chapter on research methods, I will explain how I undertook the PAR research approach in fieldwork and how I analysed the data collection for the findings of this research

CHAPTER 4 : METHODS

This chapter describes the research methods used in the thesis and my reflections on the process. It features sensitive ethical considerations particular to my research, given its topic area, inter-religious tensions in parts of Thailand, and, especially in reaction to the Christchurch terrorist attack in New Zealand, 15 March 2019, that left 51 Muslims dead (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2020). It provides selected Muslim and Buddhist participant profiles as rich background texture for the research findings derived from the wide variety of data collection methods; in-depth interviews, life-story interviews, focus group discussions, community workshop, transect walks, and fieldwork journals.

4.1 Ethical considerations

Before conducting this study, the research application was reviewed and approved by the AUTC (number 18/428: see Appendix A). A major function of research ethical approval is to protect participants, particularly the more vulnerable, regardless of religion, social class, faith affiliation, age and gender orientation (Leavy, 2017; Silverman, 2021).

During my research AUTC raised serious concerns about risk mitigation for me, as researcher, and for my participants, given my research topic and the committee's perception of Muslim/Buddhist tensions in parts of Thailand, and, especially after the Christchurch terrorist attacks where 51 Muslims were killed on 15 March 2019 (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2020). The AUTC committee was concerned that I, and my participants, may become at-risk due to Islamophobic activities in our community research site. These sensitivities were ongoing throughout my research.

My response to AUTC concerns involved several steps. First, I provided written explanation that the study was being conducted in Al-Mubarak Community, in a North-eastern Thai village, where Muslims and Buddhists had lived in peace together for 25 years since the original small number of Muslim migrants had settled in the village. Muslim and Buddhist villagers were all Thais and spoke the same languages, Thai, the

national language, and the local Isan dialect. As the researcher, I also explained I had worked with people in this area for 20 years, and all participants were familiar with me as a founding member of this community. I further explained that current Thai Muslim/Buddhist tensions were primarily located in the southern Thai, Muslim-majority, provinces bordering Malaysia, and had very different social, ethnic, cultural and political histories compared to my research site in the Buddhist-majority North-eastern-Isan region.

In addition to the above, the ethics process and potential risk and discomfort factors were explained to the participants before, during, and, after each step in the research process. I worked hard to sustain a transparent partnership process between myself, as researcher, and the participants at all times, eased by the participants' prior knowledge and experience with me as a long-term community member. At each step of the research process, I also consulted closely with my academic supervisors, the village phuyaiban (village chief), community leaders and senior Muslim and Buddhist community members on social, cultural, and religious issues pertaining to the research. I also attended monthly village meetings to clarify and update village members on the research process. My academic supervisors' contact details were made available to key community members.

My AUT field supervisor was based at Khon Kaen University, a Thai university, one hour's drive from the research field site. At the beginning of data collection, he visited the community and met and discussed the research with a selection of community members in a village walkabout. He also met teachers and students at the school and had a formal discussion about the research with the school director and executive team. He also discussed the research process with the Imam and a senior FEDMIN member and visited the mosque, associated community buildings, and the FEDMIN headquarters building. It was made clear that he was readily available by phone, or could visit at short

notice, if concerns arose. We met monthly for formal supervision (sometimes bi-weekly) and were in regular phone (video and text) contact.

Finally, I submitted a written risk mitigation and escalation proposal to the AUTC committee outlining resources and procedures available to me and participants if an emergency arose e.g., local first responder services, police, security, fire, health services etc.

4.2 Personal Reflection

I was born Muslim, in a Southern Thai Muslim village, in a predominantly Muslim region of Thailand. I was sent to a Buddhist temple school and was primarily educated in public (Buddhist) schools, living in a religious cultural society. I moved away from southern Thailand and have now lived and worked for over 20 years with Muslim communities in the North-eastern-Isan region of Thailand, where Buddhists are the majority community. Social and cultural diversity has been a daily reality throughout my life. I am now passionate about this issue.

During my fieldwork, I was invited by local senior Buddhists and the Abbott to the End of Buddhist Lent ceremony at the village Buddhist temple. I observed the event with curiosity and was respectfully introduced by the temple's spokesperson; "Today, a Muslim scholar is invited to join our important Buddhist event. We are all pleased to welcome him to be with us."

At this cultural/religious ceremony, I humbly learned to respect the embedded social, faith, and gendered differences in my research area. As a (Muslim) researcher, I faced many challenges in the research area - I had to deal sensitively with different cultural perspectives and intergenerational views of Muslim women and men, and my Buddhist participants. I worked hard at being transparent and respectful always insisting that "I am here as a student who needs your knowledge and wisdom."

4.3 Community Research Setting

Ban Nong Muean Thao village had the standard Thai village features, community health centre, primary school, village market (talad), several smaller shops, local governmental body offices etc. Al-Mubarak Community, where the Muslim families cluster also had a small mosque, a Muslim community foundation FEDMIN office. It also had a 200 pupil Muslim community-run primary/pre-school complex, but essentially inter-faith, with less than 20 per cent of students from Muslim families; five of the 16 teachers are Thai Muslims, one is an Indonesian Muslim, eight are Thai Buddhists, and two are Filipino Catholic. The STW School provided a community service beyond the local Muslim community. Some pupils came in daily from outside this village and even from Udon Thani, the nearest large city, about 15-20 kilometres away. Islamic religious education went on after school hours and only with Muslim pupils. Other Muslims outside the local community also used the mosque. The Imam of the mosque also met with the village Buddhist monks when necessary over village/community issues. All Muslim and Buddhist members often worked together for their community development through voluntary activities in the village. In all Muslim community ceremonies, Buddhist neighbours were invited to join as guests and staff of those events and activities.

4.4 Participants and recruitment

A total of 99 community members agreed to participate in the study (76 Muslim and 23 Buddhist villagers) and contributed via a range of data collection processes: in-depth interviews, life-story interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks and a group workshop. I initially presented information about the research to all members of the Al-Mubarak Community; about 300 people were potential participants, Muslim community members from the Al-Mubarak Mosque, the FEDMIN Foundation, the STW School, the Muslim women's group of the Isan Mualaf Club, Udon Thani's Muslim Football Club, and Buddhist neighbours.

At the commencement of my fieldwork, I introduced myself and my research details to the Muslim members at Al-Mubarak Mosque's Friday congregational prayer, where community members gathered in large numbers weekly. The Imam of Al-Mubarak Mosque introduced me to all members of that community congregation. For the Buddhist participants, I met with the Head of the village to explain my research project and then I was invited to attend the Ban Nong Muean Thao village's monthly meeting to present my research details to the Buddhist villagers. Then I began to participate in community meetings and activities to connect with people in the research area mutually. I also attempted to ensure an intergenerational spread among participants to tap into their personal experiences of the dynamics of the community's development. Table 1 is a summary break-out of participants and data collection processes.

Table 1*Participants and data collection processes*

Methods	Participants	Gender		Faith affiliations		Generations		
	Numbers	Male	Female	Islam	Buddhism	G1	G2	G3
In-depth interviews	27	14	13	22	5	16	9	2
Life-story interviews	2	1	1	2		2		
Transect walks	6	3	3	6		2	2	2
A focus group for Muslim women	12		12	12		5	5	2
A focus group for football club	12	12		10	2		7	5
A focus group for Buddhist neighbours	10	9	1		10	4	6	
A community Workshop (Muslims & Buddhists in three generations)	30	10	20	24	6	15	13	2
Total	99	49	50	76	23	44	42	13
Percentage (%)	100%	49%	51%	77%	23%	44%	43%	13%

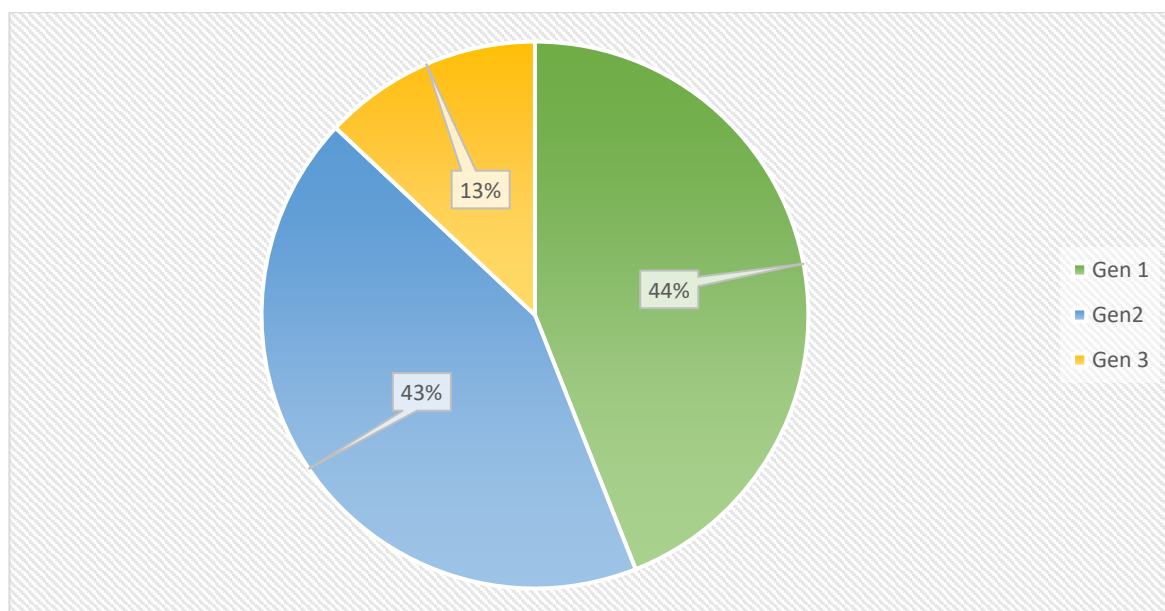
I used a set of eight broad guidelines when recruiting participants.

First, I used an intergenerational criterion to tap into the settlement patterns and dynamic of the community's development. (See Figure 5 for Intergenerational participant contribution). Al-Mubarak Community was established in 1995 and there are now three generations of community members evident. The first generation (older adults) were the first incoming Muslim migrants who established the community. The second generation (young adults) are descendants of the first generation who have returned from their

education and employment in Bangkok and other big cities to settle in the community. The third generation, youth and children, were born in the community.

Figure 5

Intergenerational participant contribution



Second, I focused on adults, or members of the youth football team, as potential participants, and purposively chose participants for the in-depth interviews to give a balance of age, gender, birthplace and length of time in the community. All individuals approached agreed to participate.

Third, recruitment was purposive, based on direct personal invitation for the in-depth interviews. All members of the Muslim women's group and the youth football team were invited for the focus group discussions, and I also asked for volunteers from these groups for the transect walks. All participants from both Muslim and Buddhist sides were invited to the community workshop at Al-Mubarak Mosque to reflect on and discuss the process of the Al-Mubarak Community's development and neighbourhood building.

My fourth criteria excluded people who did not belong to the village community, along with anyone unable to give informed consent. Children under 16 were excluded, and

physical disabilities excluded some community members from participating in the transect walk.

Fifth, the participants for interviews were contacted in person on an individual basis based on their experiences, age, gender, and to ensure a range of occupations. Participants often indicated their interest in participating by approaching me in person, or by telephone.

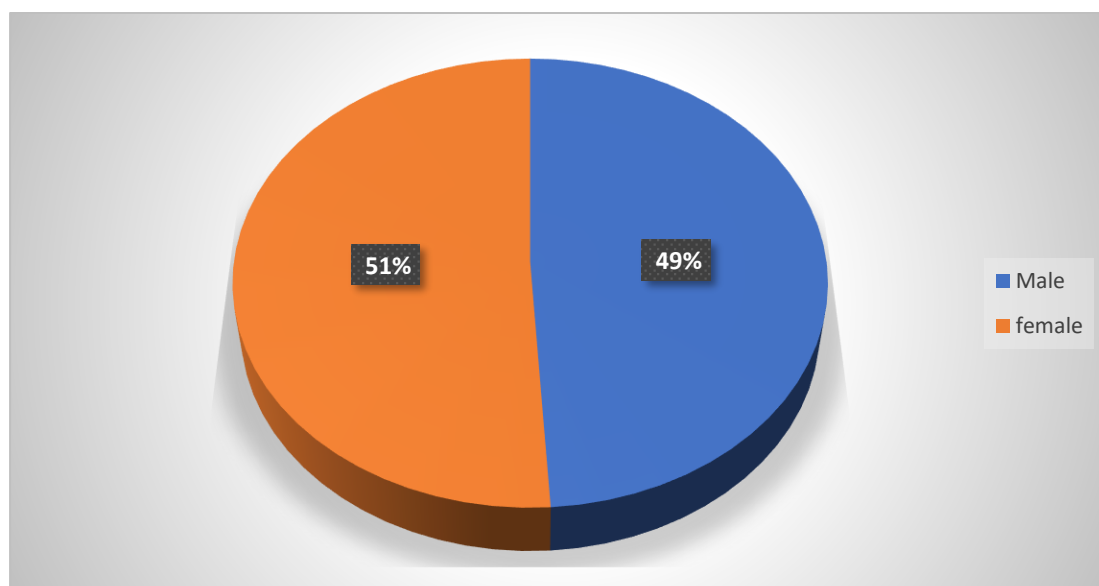
Sixth, I purposively recruited 23 Buddhist participants using a snowballing technique (Scheyvens, 2014) based on recommendations from Muslim community members. They identified Buddhist neighbours likely to be knowledgeable about the evolution of the community and those who had lived near the Muslim community. Five Buddhist participants, who have been living alongside first Muslim generation villagers agreed to participate in the in-depth interviews, 10 for a Buddhist neighbours' focus group, two Buddhists attended the football club focus group. Six Buddhist participants joined the joint Buddhist/Muslim community workshop. (See Figure 7 for the percentage of Muslim and Buddhist participants in the study and Table 1 for participants and data collection processes)

Seventh, prior to the life story interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and transect walks, each participant carefully read the consent form before me, and I answered any questions. All participants agreed to sign the consent forms.

Eighth, I recruited almost equal numbers of women and men approximating the gender distribution in the community (See Figure 6 for gender participation).

Figure 6

The percentage of gender participants



4.5 Participant anonymity and confidentiality

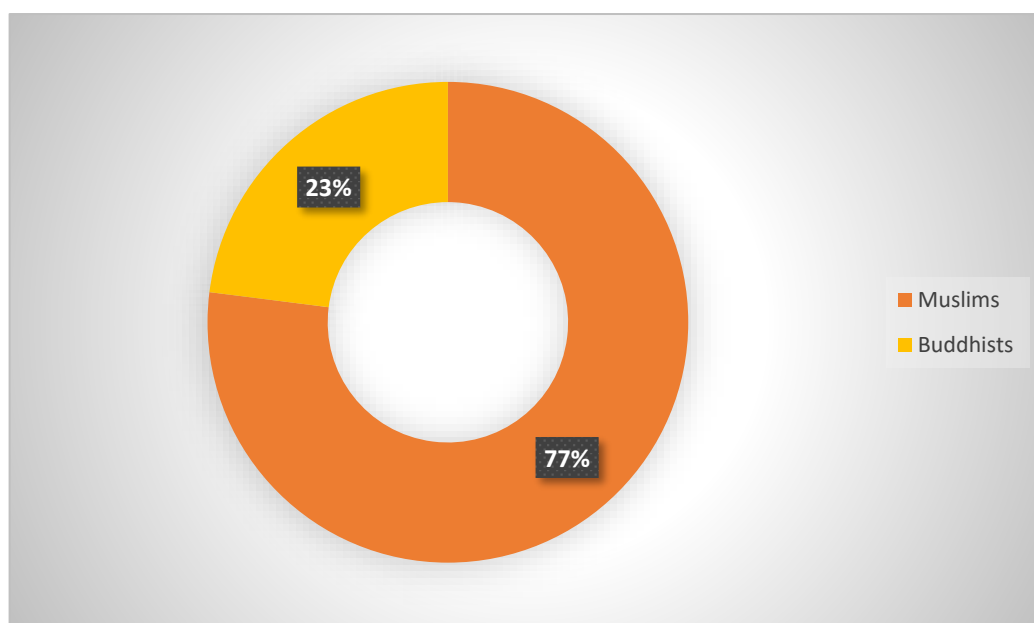
As part of inducting participants into the research I explained that all information and data collected would be held in confidence, I assured them that their anonymity and confidentiality would be protected by not using their names and using pseudonyms to safeguard their identity. I informed all my participants that "I have to protect your right, and my research doesn't want you to be harmed by any problems that may occur in the future" Most of them replied in the same manner "We trust you to ensure you do what is suitable for our community. You can use our names in this research freely. We are happy to be an essential part of your study". All participants wanted their names to be used openly. Therefore, this study recognised and acknowledged their request for public use of their names.

4.6 Participant profiles

To give an insight into the rich community contextual background for this study I have presented a sample of biographies of Muslim and Buddhist participants below. They follow in alphabetical order.

Figure 7

The percentage of Muslim and Buddhist participants in the study



4.6.1 Muslim participant profiles

Abdullah (40 years old), a businessman, with his own construction company, is an active second-generation member of Al-Mubarak Community. He is inspired by Kru Haroon's original community development vision. He is a founding member of Udon Thani's Muslim Football Club where Muslim and non-Muslim play together and is a major contributor to humanitarian work throughout Udon Thani Province.

Abdul Rahman (57 years old) is a Norwegian journalist and academic, who lives in Al-Mubarak Community with his Isan wife. Both are Muslim converts. He performs daily prayers at Al-Mubarak Mosque, loves to discuss history, politics and philosophy, and is also very interested in Early Childhood Education.

Aminah (59 years old) is Hajji Haroon Samadeh's wife. Their family was the first Muslim family to settle in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. She is now one of most respected Muslim women for promoting Muslim/Buddhist relationships and understanding both within Udon Thani province and the broader Isan (North-eastern) region. She is one of founding members of the Isan Mualaf Club, Udon Thani province, and has devoted herself to promoting Muslim converts' well-being and human rights through this community organisation.

Apirat (72 years old) is a first-generation Muslim in Al-Mubarak Community. He has been an active volunteer supporting the community's development since its outset in 1995, particularly at the SWT school. He, and Kru Haroon, nurtured Muslim youth in the Isan region at the Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth in Udon Thani City before moving to Al-Mubarak Community in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village. Currently, he is entirely focussed on Muslim affairs across Udon Thani Province.

Danai (74 years old) is the vice-president of the FEDMIN Foundation and is a former vice-president of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. He is committed to all members of Al-Mubarak and other Muslim communities participating in all affairs of their community and society. He is passionate about improving SWT School's system for the future. He founded the Amana Institute to provide educational and social platforms for the younger Muslim generation and local people to work together and make positive changes in Sakon Nakhon society. Danai lives in Sakon Nakhon Province and visits Al-Mubarak Community regularly.

Dawud (53 years old) is the one shop owner selling Halal slaughtered meat in the fresh food market in Tambon Non-Sung Market. He produces and delivers Halal meat to both Muslim and non-Muslim clients daily. He also serves as a committee of Al-Mubarak Mosque.

Fareeda (59 years old) is a determined advocate for human rights and the rights of children in Udon Thani province and the Isan region. She is a former member of the Municipal Council of Udon Thani City Municipality. She is a strong supporter of quality education for children, empowering women at the local level, and is involved in many Muslim and other faith community organisations. She is a recipient of Thai national women's awards, and a major contributor to FEDMIN Foundation, the STW School and the Isan Mualaf Club. Recently, she is a board member of National Health Commission Office (NHCO) representing the Participatory Health Region zone 8, which comprises of 7 provinces in Isan region. Fareeda is a proud Muslim representative in the health sector at national development level.

Fatimah (64 years old) is a strong advocate for grassroots justice in Udon Thani province, and especially vocal for communities' rights against Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). She is an active member of Al-Mubarak Mosque and devoted to building Muslim and non-Muslim inter-faith relationships and the community's future development. Fatimah and her husband were both active in the original settlement and development of Al-Mubarak Community.

Hanafi (45 years old) is an active second-generation member of Al-Mubarak Community, and his family has been active in Al-Mubarak Community since its establishment. He is a founding member of Udon Thani's Muslim Football Club and is active in volunteer and humanitarian work among Muslim communities in Udon Thani Province.

Hamidah (66 years old), a retired public servant, is a devout Muslim who promotes Muslim and non-Muslim relationships at public sector and local community level. She is very active in the Al-Mubarak Community, and her financial management and accounting expertise makes a great contribution to community organisations. After retirement, she has also devoted herself to seriously learning and understanding the Qur'an.

Ismail (37 years old) is the FEDMIN Foundation's Secretary-General, the STW School's Manager and the Khateeb of Al-Mubarak Mosque, the second leadership ranking in

mosque's management team. In Islam, Khateeb is a person who delivers the Islamic sermon (literally "narration"), during the Friday congregational prayer and Eid prayers. He is a second-generation community member and an active coordinator among governmental agencies, public sector and civil society at local and national levels. He is also a certified Halal expert in the Thai food industry and promotes environmental issues at the STW School and in the village. He also promotes peaceful communication among Thai people regardless of religions and faith community.

Jamilah (41 years old) is an advocate for promoting quality education among Muslim and non - Muslim youth in the rural communities in Udon Thani Province. She is deputy director for academic affairs at the STW School, and strongly promotes the school's curriculum on multiculturalism and pluralism among the school's students and staff. She is an active member of all organisations in the Al-Mubarak Community.

Khadijah (78 years old) is a first generation, Muslim convert. She served as a chef at FEDMIN Foundation's kitchen and was an active assistant of Kru Haroon. She was a former director of the Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth before the Centre became the kindergarten and later the STW School. She is passionate about food provision for the community affairs and sustaining the FEDMIN Foundation's headquarters area.

Lek (46 years old) is a senior Muslim activist in Udon Thani province, and a founding member of Udon Thani's Muslim Football Club. He has an Art and Design shop in Udon Thani city and has long contributed his artwork for Al-Mubarak Community events, and other Muslim communities in the province. He is also a major contributor to humanitarian work in Udon Thani province.

Mariam (58 years old) runs her own village shop called 'Mariam's Bakery Shop'. She and her husband, Ansorry (67 years old) have adopted King Rama IX's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and are living examples of how to live pesticide residue-free and follow the self-sufficiency philosophy. Her family a significant contributor to Al-

Mubarak Community's development and in bridging misunderstandings between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village.

Muslimah (27 years old) is a third-generation Muslim community member. She is a religious teacher and assistant to the Imam. She is concerned about the Muslim community's future in the Isan region and is keen to teach Islamic principles to all children in the Community. She graduated from Al-Azhar University, a public university in Cairo, Egypt.

Mustafa (50 years old) is an agribusinessman who works for several humanitarian organisations and SMEs in the Isan region and nationally and has been on FEDMIN Foundation and STW School board committees. He worked hard to bring Muslims and non-Muslims together through his work during recent severe floods in Isan.

Nurisan (41 years old) is a public servant. She is a major Figure in the Isan Mualaf Club, empowering Muslim women converts to achieve quality of life and well-being. As a mother, she encourages her children to live in peace with children of different faiths in the Community. All her family members are active participants in the community's development.

Patinya (41 years old) is a second-generation member of Al-Mubarak Community, is the current director of the STW School, and recipient of an excellence award for private schooling in Thailand. He is a strong promotor of the multiculturalism policy for Thai Muslim schools and has long experience in public - private partnerships.

Preeda, PhD (75 years old) is the long serving president of FEDMIN Foundation, a founding "father" of the STW School and Al-Mubarak Community, and previously a Khon Kaen University economist. He is a prominent Muslim scholar and respected pioneer on Muslim community development locally, nationally and internationally. He is widely published on Muslim affairs nationally and globally and has also been recognised as an outstanding public servant by the Royal Thai government.

Sarfar (58 years old) is a vice-president of the FEDMIN Foundation. He is a management expert for NGOs and the private sector and is currently a management team leader for Ford Teekacharoen Company Limited, Udon Thani Province. He is also keen to improve management skills among Muslim youth and to promote Al-Mubarak Community's spiritual development. Safat is the current Bilal of Al-Mubarak Mosque, the third leadership ranking at the mosques in Thailand after Imam and Khateeb respectively. Muslim communities in Thailand recognised 'Bilal' as an important role in all mosques around the kingdom.

Shafei (46 years old) is the current elected Imam of Al-Mubarak Mosque, migrated from Phatthalung Province, a southern Thai province. A graduate from the Islamic University of Madinah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he is a strong advocate for creating an Islamic environment focused on Al-Mubarak Mosque to respond to the need of all community members who aspire to learn the Noble Qur'an and Islamic principles

Sultan (29 years old) is an active third generation Muslim from Al-Mubarak Community. One of Kru Haroon's students at the Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth; his generation is growing up and many are moving out to Udon Thani and other cities. He often comes to Al-Mubarak to help with community activities.

Tasneem (30 years old) is a Muslim mother of two children and is actively engaged in Al-Mubarak and wider village community activities.

4.6.2 Buddhist participant profiles

Bua (56 years old) is the current Ban Nong Muean Thao village chief, a rarely elected female leader in Udon Thani province. People call her 'Maē Būa', or, Mother of Lotus, and she is highly respected for bringing people of different faiths together to live and work as villagers in Ban Nong Muean Thao. She has a robust relationship with regional government and strongly pursues government schemes likely to have local, or village impact. She is an active Buddhist woman leader in Udon Thani province.

Dawan (61 years old) is a Buddhist advocate for community health development and voluntary activities in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. She is a founding member of the Angel Aerobic Sport Group and works actively in the Al-Mubarak Community promoting daily interfaith dialogue and interaction at the grassroots level.

Phra Ching Chai (67 years old), a venerable Buddhist monk, people called him 'Lūang Pho' in Thai. He is the abbot of Wat Nong Muean Thao (a village Buddhist temple). He has been serving as an active Buddhist monk at local level. People highly honour and respect him for his noble work in Buddhist community's development. Phra Ching Chai has long relationship with the first-generation members of Al-Mubarak Community.

Prathin (71 years old), a former village chief of Ban Nong Muean Thao village from 1998-2007 and 2007-2013, has also been sub-district headman of Non-Sung sub-district of Udon Thani Province where Al-Mubarak Community is located. He is a Buddhist who worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for over a decade. He worked closely with Kru Haroon and Dr Preeda on community development and interfaith activities from the establishment of Al-Mubarak Community. He is still active politically and in community development locally.

Somjit (64 years old) is a devout Buddhist with has long experience of public organisation development and grassroots' capacity development. She is an active member of voluntary activities in the village.

4.7 Data collection

Data collection procedures and processes are described in a field-work narrative research journey format below. Consistent with PAR research process community engagement, collaborative research goal development and data collection were ongoing iterative processes focused on co-creating a shared understanding of community issues and priorities and potential action plans for Al-Mubarak Community. In addition to the qualitative methods, e.g., life story interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, transect

walks, participant observations, I kept a research journal of my observations and insights throughout the process, and these are blended into my fieldwork story below.

4.7.1 The fieldwork story- From testing the unknown to a blessing of understanding

Fieldwork was a test of my intellectual humility and sensitivity towards the understandings and self-confidence of community members about their community. Before I began fieldwork, I thought my research knowledge and skills would be adequate to complete my studies. However, community members frequently challenged me to understand their stories and their everyday lived experiences on/in their terms. These challenges opened me up to new insights into research process and community knowledge. I have divided my story into four stages, as follows: scoping the field, entering fieldwork, leaving the field, reflecting on fieldwork.

Stage 1: Scoping the field

Scoping was divided into two periods. In the first period, between April-June 2019, I began preliminary community engagement and pilot testing some data collection processes while my ethics application was approved. I began relationship building with key community persons, observing their daily routines, activities, different ways of life – particularly the social, economic, political, and religious diversity. From the early community engagement days both Muslim and Buddhist participants were curious and supportive of research that would investigate their community and expected that it could bring positive changes for their future. One stated, "I know you asked us to participate in your study. I wish you all the best. I just want to know how my participation can make this community a better place for us. I believe that you can do something good for our community with your thesis." At this point, I realised that "My thesis is in their hands. I must work jointly "with" them, not "for" or "on" them as was my initial consciousness before I came into the fieldwork.

I also piloted some draft semi-structured interview formats with Muslim and Buddhist participants. I then returned to AUT University to refine my interview frameworks. One example of a research process learning challenge from that time was when one Buddhist lady recommended.

Your inquiries use academic words that people don't understand. So, you should change those words into generic words that people better understand, or when you ask them, please use the language they understand.

After reflecting on my scoping phase experiences, I revised my interview data gathering frameworks to be more flexible and practical. I decided to expand to include less structured "life-story" interviews with 2 key persons, semi-structured interviews with a broader group, FGDs, transect walks and a community workshop to tap into different aspects of people's experiences and views (Scheyvens, 2014). My inquiry focus now had four parts:

- 1) issues around definitions, characteristics, values, success and failures in the community,
- 2) the importance and relevance of community development to people's wellbeing and future,
- 3) sustainable environment development, which included environmental depletion impacts on people lives, on community development policy and practice, and long-term environmental issues for the community, and
- 4) the community settlement process, community environment change, actual events related to perceived successes and failures in the community's history. Thus, I was now ready to go back to the field with a new and focused set of inquiries and much more developed data collection strategies.

State 2: Entering fieldwork

The second, and formal field work period of my research started after my AUTECH ethics application was approved on 8 July 2019, after 8 months of submissions and negotiations (and re-negotiations) with the committee. My data collection phase occurred between July to November 2019.

My interviews, FGDs and data gathering in general, incorporated topic areas that had emerged from my community engagements in the scoping phase. Community members had made their expectations clear about topics they considered important to be covered in the research on their community's development and status—in effect, co-creating data collection aims. For instance, do people move to this community because they believe they can make a future with others? Does the community nurture their hope into a reality? How can children acquire a quality education? Do community leaders play an essential role in building this community? Is women's power critical to community development? Is faith the central aspect of community development?

Throughout the research, I stressed my role as a student who sought new knowledge from the community with an agreement that "We will work closely together in this community as research partners." I used five rules for working collaboratively within PAR partnership ethos.

- 1) As the researcher I understood that the research is about their community's development. Therefore, all research participants have the right to ask and inquire about all research process steps, particularly its data collection process.
- 2) Research participants and I share an understanding of the diversity of the research community and stress respect for, and valuing of, different social, gender, religious faith, and political backgrounds.
- 3) I protect research participants' rights and dignity for their well-being and accomplishment, and readily address all issues of concern that might affect their daily lives that occur during my fieldwork.
- 4) Both the researcher and community participants acknowledge that this thesis is supposed to be a community asset that all community members can benefit from.
- 5) The community has the right to utilise these research outcomes for the sake of their community affairs.

The specific qualitative research methods I used for data collection follow.

Interviewing – listening to stories of a purpose

This research used two interview types.

“Life-story” interviews

I used a “life-story” modified semi-structured interview format to interview two long-established first-generation Muslim community members. They (1 male, 1 female) were both very active in community activities and affairs and I considered their valuable life-stories would be key contributions to the research. I began using initial prompts from the semi-structured interview form (see Appendix B) and let them move on in their own way about the evolution and dynamics of the Al-Mubarak Community, how it had changed over their time there, key players and issues in its early development and how they felt the community contributed to members’ quality of life and well-being and the wider society. They wanted their life stories to be written and hoped that sharing their histories would help the next generation know and understand “where we were” and “why we are here” and benefit future community development. These two life story accounts became a background framework for linking events and experiences from the later interview and focus group participants.

Each of these 2 audiotaped interviews were about one hour and a half for each and took place in the FEDMIN Foundation's headquarters.

After I finished these interviews, I listened to the audios of their stories, transcribed them into Thai and rechecked dates and events. I had the participant’s review and corrected their transcripts before I moved on to further interviews. Subsequently I translated them into English.

In-depth interviews

I carried out 26 in-depth interviews – (13 male participants, 13 female participants; 21 Muslim and five Buddhist participants). Most Muslim participants were first or second generation respectively.

Each in-depth interview took about 90 minutes, but a small number were two hours. All used the semi-structured interview format (see Appendix B), were audio-recorded and carried out in the participant's home or other community setting of their choice. Audiotapes were later transcribed into English for analysis.

I faced practical challenges in this interview phase. First generation community members lived full-time in the research area. In contrast, the second and third generations were often working and studying in Bangkok and other big cities in the Isan region, with only occasional village visits. I had to "capture" them for interviews when I could.

I also faced significant and sensitive interpersonal challenges, dealing with different opinions from people of different cultures and religious backgrounds. I had never imagined that I would have to play a "courier" role between the two faith communities to carry messages to neighbours thoughtfully and harmoniously.

For instance, I visited the Buddhist temple to meet with "Jao āwāt" (the abbot) and his devout followers. He invited me to interview him in his private quarters. When I asked him, "What do you think about Al-Mubarak Community's development?" He smiled and replied.

I know many Muslims, particularly Kru Haroon and his family. I am pleased to know that the STW School sent its students and teachers to help clean our temple recently. I think we can continue to maintain such activity. I am closely investigating what is happening in the Muslim community. Our temple is always open for our Muslim friends to visit. You are the first Muslim researcher who visits the village temple to talk and discuss our stories. Please kindly convey our kind greetings and message to the Imam and Muslim brothers if you do not mind.

In another example, I interviewed a local politician who wanted me to convey his comments. He wanted to see Muslims participate more in village affairs than they had before. He told me that "I aspire to work with the Muslim members and hope to see their participation in our village more."

During interviews I became aware of participant's varying personal views on the Muslim community development and their Buddhist neighbours and vice-versa. As a researcher,

I had to deeply listen to what all the participants needed to say and not judge people of different points of view, even if it was hard to do this. Being a Muslim researcher working with the Buddhist community was one of the most critical challenges. I had to avoid my bias when Buddhist participants made critical comments about the Muslim community. It was not easy to deal with this issue, and I had to let my participants have their views and opinions as they were essential participants in this research.

I worked hard to maintain mutual trust and respect between myself, as researcher, and research participants. I consider a measure of my success at this was that all interview participants were comfortable enough to invite me into their private homes for the interviews.

My interviews uncovered sensitive issues regarding faith, religious teachings, and religious leaders. These issues required managing with confidentiality and courtesy. As the researcher, these views were my data and I had to acknowledge them and consider how I should report on them: how and what to describe. Did I have to leave those stories of complaints and negative judgments behind and consider the solidarity of people of different faiths as more meaningful than some criticisms they may not notice at all.

Focus group discussions –valuing diverse group of peoples

I conducted three focus group discussions, one with Muslim women, one with the youth football team, one with Buddhist neighbours and one larger combined community workshop group with both Muslim and Buddhists from Ban Nong Muean Thao village.

The focus groups took two hours for each group, and the community workshop about three hours. There were 64 group discussion participants in total, 12 in the Muslim women's group, 12 in the youth football team group, 10 in the Buddhist neighbours' group, and 30 in the combined community workshop (See Table 1 for Participants and data collection processes and Figure 7 for the percentage of Muslim and Buddhist participants in the study).

I recruited focus group members via a personal invitation letter to potential participants, based on recommendations from in-depth interviewees (key informants), about persons in the village likely to be knowledgeable and experienced in the research topic area. I then met them in person to receive their replies and agreement to participate.

I encountered unpredictable process challenges in scheduling the focus groups and discussions. Some participants had their jobs in other cities, they could only participate on weekends. Some accepted but then had urgent family issues arise and they left the area suddenly to attend to those. Some travelled to other provinces at short notice to assist families and relatives impacted by severe storms and floods that devastated many Isan provinces in 2019. Hence, I had to wait and adjust my schedules until suitable times arrived for the groups. Thankfully all maintained their commitment to the research and were eventually able to participate.

I used six guiding strategies for conducting the groups as follows.

First, respect for the right and dignity of all participants was the primary strategy for bringing all participants together. I started all groups with transparency and open-mindedness, outlining the research aims and processes again and participants' rights to clarify, question and stop the conversation if they felt uncomfortable. I attempted to make the focus groups as informal and relaxed as possible.

Second, I conducted the focus groups in settings of intimacy and relaxation. For example, the Buddhist participants group, was held at the home of a Muslim community member, Sister Mariam. Her family helped arrange all facilities, including lunch, for the discussion. I was delighted when they came to Sister Mariam's, all smiling and relaxed. We all had lunch together and chatted about their paddy fields damaged by the storms and daily village issues. It seemed that the sense of familiarity and closeness promoted by the research process was unleashing enthusiasm and a positive dynamic about the coming discussion session.

Third, many participants were highly active during the conversation, particularly 12 Muslim and 12 Buddhist women. Most women, especially from the first and second generations, brought an enthusiastic dynamic to the process. They never stop talking and explaining the topics related to their lives, families and community. Such dynamics had made the discussion successful without my researcher intervention.

Fourth, I attempted to make the focus groups comfortable for all participants to share their stories and relationships with others, fully and proudly. For instance, the community workshop had 15 persons representing the first generation, 13 participants of the second generation, and two participants representing their third generation. I could rightly claim that "It is the first time for both faiths to meet together in a formal, but relaxing, conversational setting". It was one of the biggest challenges in my research process, to bring the two cultural groups together to look at the community development process. I used the workshop room of Al-Mubarak Mosque to hold the community meeting, signalling that the mosque was not only a place for worship, but was also available for wider community activities, particularly those that could bring Muslims and Buddhists to talk about their shared futures. Buddhist participants had the opportunity to visit Muslim neighbours and the mosque, had lunch together, observed the prayer, and talked with the Imam and children played. Therefore, the group discussion components in my research process were also mobilising and strengthening community integration, in addition to their formal data collection focus. I saw this as a steppingstone for bringing diverse people together as a base for further collaboration.

Fifth, the community workshop provided a space for Muslim and Buddhist participants to think about shared values and the future for the village. The main point generated for the community workshop was that both sides were willing to engage with each other more. They aspired to come closer to each other and do new things together. Two immediate and very practical examples were guarding and cleaning the main community road and the village regularly. Therefore, the community workshop's contribution was about

growing and sharing values and a common future with people of different faiths who wanted to live together. Further workshop derived opportunities for the Al-Mubarak Community's development will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Sixth, the focus group with the 12 football team members motivated them, as the next generation, to think intensely about their community's future. This focus group session started with me joining the team on the pitch for a football match. After that, we sat down on the grass, and discussed their perceptions of the community, environment and activities that they did to promote the wellbeing of community members. This group was strongly motivated to use football to bring Muslim and Buddhist youth together. Their community humanitarian and voluntary service stories needed to be heard and shared with others.

They wanted to break the wall of mistrust and misunderstanding among Muslim and Buddhist youth by playing football together and keeping away from drugs that had a tremendous impact on the quality of life in communities in the Isan region and Thailand. I appreciated that they made my focus group possible even though it broke into their playing time. In return, I had in effect opened a space for them to think about the future of their community, which they appreciated and acknowledged.

All my qualitative methods used in the field supported me to understand and acknowledge the heartfelt ideas and views of the different groups of people – faiths, gender, and ages, who desired to make positive differences for their community and people with their own resources. Establishing and nurturing trust and respect between the researcher and research participants was at the heart of this research process. Working with people in the field requires more than just appropriate research methods. People's hearts are the key to its success.

Transect walks-walking with people across the generations

I used to transect walks in the community as a unique method of facilitating intergenerational stories about the community and its development, with its physical layout, buildings, lanes etc and social intersection points e.g., the market, as living prompts for the participants' reflections and insights.

I conducted 3 transect walks with each walk group comprised of one female and one male participant from the same generational group. The walks took one hour each and moved through the Al-Mubarak Community area and larger Ban Nong Muean Thao village while I recorded the conversation between my participants and myself.

Transect walks with the first generation illustrated the long history of building Al-Mubarak Community and weaving the solidarity between Muslims as the new settlers and Buddhists as the helpers. Their stories of making a neighbourhood were stunning and remarkable to me. It was a special learning moment for the researcher: there was so much about where I lived that I didn't know.

Figure 8

Al-Mubarak Community in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village, Udon Thani Province



The village map in Figure 8 for Al-Mubarak Community presents major village features that the transect walk groups passed on their journey;

- 1) Al-Mubarak Mosque
- 2) STW School
- 3) FEDMIN Foundation
- 4) Non-Sung Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO)
- 5) Ban Nong Muean Thao Buddhist Temple

- 6) The Village Hall
- 7) Honda Motor Company
- 8) Ban Nong Muean Thao Health Promoting Hospital [the Community Health Centre]
- 9) The Ice-factory
- 10) The Muslim residential area
- 11) The Buddhist residential area
- 12) The village ponds
- 13) The forest conservation

Participants brought me to where they started to build the Muslim Al-Mubarak Community in a part of a majority Buddhist village. They said that before they decided to settle down in this village, many founding members of the Al-Mubarak Community had lived in the city of Udon Thani province and assembled at the central mosque of Udon Thani Province. At that time, they dreamt of how to build a Muslim community living in a natural environment. They needed land to build a mosque, a school, a foundation that would be a focal point for Isan Muslims who wanted to send their children to learn Islam and settle down in this new landscape of a Muslim community. They found land that Buddhist villagers were willing to sell in about 1995; the lands later become Al-Mubarak Community area, including a residential area, FEDMIN Foundation, Al-Mubarak Mosque and STW School.

The transect walk went across the Muslim community space and the wider village through many important places (see Figure 8 for Al-Mubarak Community in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village. As we walked, my participants and Buddhist villagers greeted and talked with each other. They knew each other; they spoke the same language – local Isan, and talked about their families, children, community events, and jobs. My participants reminded me that this was their everyday life in the community and the village. People shared their lives and stories with neighbours of different faiths, as they were all Ban Nong Muean Thao village members as well. Most importantly, this “first generation” walk showed that this method was not about the community’s physical

environment, but also about daily social relationships that prompted wisdom and reflection from people who lived peacefully and harmoniously in their neighbourhoods.

Transect walks with the second generation reflected more on the dynamics of the community with its physical infrastructures for living and learning. The focus of this walk was more on the Al-Mubarak Community's FEDMIN Foundation, the STW School and Al-Mubarak Mosque area, places that the second generation had been much involved with as they grew up. They had grown up alongside Al-Mubarak Community's infrastructure development that the first generation had worked so hard to provide for their children and grandchildren to inherit their dreams and to eventually take full responsibility for the community's future.

These second-generation participants appreciated and were very proud of their community and had ideas for doing different infrastructure developments from their parents.

Participants stressed that the community must be ready for change. For example, the STW School could develop their land for promoting food security for the students and community. The mosque could manage its organisation to embrace the newcomers, and the FEDMIN foundation could work with several other humanitarian organisations at both national and international levels. This second generation transect walk, was a “community software” of new ideas, thinking, passion and actions about community infrastructure development. These new era stories for Al-Mubarak Community's development were positively surprising to me.

Transect walks with the third generation, produced more reflective material with participants commenting on the first and second generations contributions to the community. They recalled their grandparents and parents taking them to the annual Isan region Islamic summer camps organised by FEDMIN Foundation and Al-Mubarak Mosque.

These one-month summer camps became their school where they learned Islam from volunteer teachers from universities in the south of Thailand and Bangkok. They were places where they developed Muslim friendship networks. Many eventually returned as camp volunteers to look after the next Muslim generation as they had been nourished by their second generation and volunteer teachers earlier.

When participants reached FEDMIN Foundation and Al-Mubarak Mosque, they recalled past events, rather than looking to the future. One male participant standing in front of the FEDMIN Foundation, suddenly said.

Every time I visit the community and look around the foundation, I see myself sleeping and eating here. I was so happy to see our elders and parents help clean up the dishes and provide food for my friends and me. I could see my teachers, who trained me in many things about Muslim life. I hope that those feelings will be back to this community again.

The three transect walks, prompted different reactions/reflections from the three generations of participants, a broad holistic understanding of the community landscape and its history. A Buddhist transect walk group would have produced useful perspectives and ideas as well but was not included in this study.

Stage 3: Leaving the field

I had the privilege of spending a great deal of time with people in the field, across all seasonal changes - summer, rain, and winter seasons. I observed their cyclic work routines of burning, planting, sowing, and harvesting their crops and rice. I then reflected on my research activities and community interactions as I prepared to return to AUT University in late 2019 to start analysing data from stage 2.

I reflected on my contacts and discussions with the people, environment, community dynamics and the challenges I faced in the field, and major issues that disrupted my data collection; having to return to my family home community for a month and a half to take care of my mother after surgery, stopping data collection due to the severe floods that

hit the research community. While in the field for almost a year I had continued writing my reports to nourish my English skills while away from New Zealand.

Arriving and leaving the field are important transitional dynamics in qualitative research journeys (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Scheyvens, 2014), often with unexpected challenges and adjustments. For me, the global COVID 19 pandemic and global travel restrictions “broke” a month after I arrived back from the field into New Zealand and I was effectively marooned there for all of 2020 and 2021. This has caused a dramatic truncation of my original action research plan as I was physically unable to return to the field to work up and implement the third and fourth PAR phases, action planning and evaluation. Thus, there was no option but to focus my research on the first two PAR action cycle phases that I had completed: community engagement and collaborative community problem assessment.

Stage 4: Reflecting on the fieldwork process

This study provided me with new insights into the PAR process as the methodology in this qualitative study. I had been a member of this community for 20 years, but I was a novice PAR practitioner. I would need to be highly reflective and understand my predispositions, and those of my participants.

Rigour and trustworthiness are critical dimensions in qualitative data analysis underpinning the “integrity” of the research findings (Hadi & José, 2016; Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, rigour refers to “confidence” in the research findings and is provided via the researcher’s robust justification of the methods used in the research process (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). My mixed-methods approach using careful combinations of data collection methods strengthened the rigour of the study. Trustworthiness, relates to data credibility and authenticity of the researcher’s interpretation of participants’ experiences and perspectives. To establish this the researcher must critically examine and reflect on participant data sets using triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Scheyvens, 2014; Patton, 2015) to look for similarities and

consistencies within and across all participant's data to assure him/herself of data credibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2015; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

It is clear that I was involved in this research from both emic and etic perspectives. I had actually been an insider (emic) as a community member living in the community from the very beginning of its establishment in 2000 until to 2007, Then I had left the community to pursue studies abroad and returned to Thailand in 2013 to live and work outside that community (etic) at Khon Kaen University in Khon Kaen City about 120 kilometres from the research community.

In the sections below I outline how I attempted to establish rigour and trustworthiness of the qualitative data from my fieldwork practice, and reflect on my emic and etic relationships with community members.

Understanding the role the researcher should play

From the first to the last day of my fieldwork, I wrote observations and reflections in my fieldwork journals.

Qualitative research acknowledges that the researcher is the central instrument in the research process (McNiff, 2017; Patton, 2015; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Scheyvens, 2014). As a qualitative researcher, I employed my fieldwork journal to analyse my role in the research process, particularly in the fieldwork process. Every day, I took notes from my non-participant and participant observations on the essential consequences of performing and acting in their daily lives. Before going to bed, I would reflect on what was written for the next day of observation and participation with people.

My everyday life in the fieldwork began at 5 am in morning. I attended the morning prayer called "Fajr prayer" with people at the mosque and then observed the Islamic teaching by the mosque's Imam and continued to perform five daily prayers with participants collectively. During the day, I attended activities at the mosque, the FEDMIN Foundation, the Mualaf Club, the STW School, the community hall, the market, the meetings etc.

I was often invited to preach the Islamic sermons at the Friday congregational prayer because I had done this in the past. I explained to the community that "I came here as a research student, not as an Islamic scholar. So, let me be a follower with you in your community affairs".

To consider my researcher role was not an easy task in the process of co-cocreation of knowledge. My role was not about guiding them with my ideas and suggestions, which might affect their decision-making on their community affairs, but supporting their roles and opinions for their own community development at the same time.

Working with people “Trust in people.”

Most of my prospective Muslim participants knew me or knew of me and were generous and willing to work with me on my research study. I had to gain the trust of others in the Al Mubarak Community. Initially, because I was an academic and seen as an authority, participants would ask me what I thought. Many times, I advised participants that this was not the dynamic in this research: everyone was an expert on the community. I found that trust became the central core of the community PAR process and all my study research process reflections. People monitored what I did daily knowing every step of my life. I felt that they were following me all the time. Some asked what I was doing and why. They were kind enough not to embarrass me.

Working with people from different faith settings was a challenge for me. For many months I resisted the suggestions from my supervisors that Buddhist neighbours would have to be participants in the research, that it would be very strange not to include them. On reflection this was a strange resistance. Most of the women in the Al Mubarak community were converts on marriage. They were raised as Buddhists in the Isan region, spoke the Isan dialect, had extensive networks and relatives in the province, and interacted with our Buddhist neighbours every day.

Sometimes, people had no time to join my interviews and focus groups. During my fieldwork people suffered from severe floods devastating their lives, property, and paddy fields. In some cases, I had to quit my study to take care of my family when they needed me. These situations are the realities to be met during fieldwork.

People kept their trust in me. Some told me they wanted to help me to be successful. They encouraged and asked what they could do to help. A sense of community ownership of the research began to develop, a sense of excitement about recording the story of the community's development. Assembling this story was both new and treasured. There was a pride in the early achievements. The PAR process has initially brought me into another side of the research process that is "Heart", the steppingstone of trust – building in the research process. Much of this story was new to me. I learned new material daily and in the process we all learned from each other.

What I don't know - reflecting on humbleness

Understanding and working with "trust in people" is a central core of the PAR process. How could I get myself and my presumptions out of the way? Who was I and what was I doing? Humility was a key behaviour for me.

During the research process, I found that people needed to be reassured about my research. Some fretted that the data – interviews, conversations they had given me would affect their lives negatively. As members of a Muslim minority community, with essentially a military government, this is an anticipated apprehension.

Reflection on the research study is not only about research writing but also about understanding people, and yourself. How could I convince people they were the experts and I wanted to hear their ideas? How could I convince them they didn't have to participate because I was an academic? I didn't have the answers. I was endeavouring to create a non-hierarchical environment, which is unusual in Thai and Muslim cultures.

4.8 Data Analysis

After leaving Thailand, I spent the entire 2020 back in New Zealand translating all the records of my interviews, focus groups and the community workshop in Thai into English – a total of 800 pages. Sometimes, I had to stop translation due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and restrictions on accessing AUT campus services. The English translation was a challenging task because Thai and English have their own structures, nuances of meaning and different linguistic and social histories.

4.8.1 Analysing with NVivo

I used NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software to analyse the data from my interviews, focus groups, workshop, weekly reports and fieldwork journals. NVivo software helped identify coding, emerging themes, reviving the coding and theming structures, then present and interpret the data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

4.8.1.1 Coding the data

Initially, I felt uncomfortable using NVivo software for the data analysis because I had always manually coded data. My supervisor introduced me to an NVivo workshop. NVivo was complicated, and my data analysis of the 800 pages took a long period of time. However, it was a valuable research instrument for my data analysis.

I used NVivo software for coding data from June to November 2020. NVivo software simplified all my data from all files saved into the software. I separated transcripts and fieldwork journals, weekend reports, and questions in the NVivo process. I then attempted to build up the themes and code five times. It was complicated to identify themes. The themes and sub-themes had gradually emerged from the data repetition, deriving the meanings and interpretations from stories of participants.

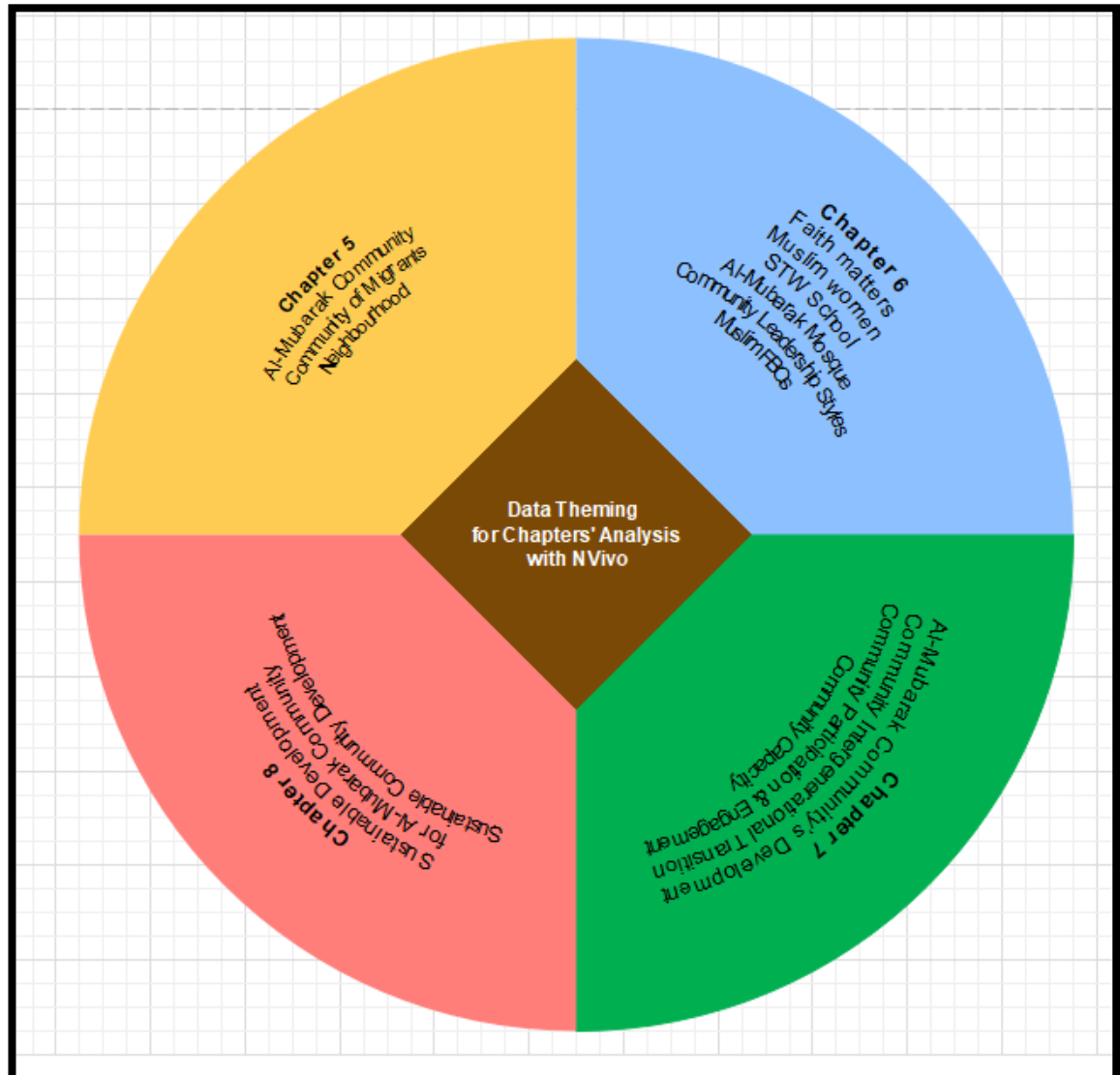
4.8.1.2 Data themes

After working with the NVivo process for six months, 143 codes were identified to represent participants' responses in fieldwork. Fifteen themes emerged from this data analysis and are the basis of the Four Findings chapters to follow.

1	Al-Mubarak Community	coded 160 times.
2	Al-Mubarak Community's Development	coded 123 times.
3	Al-Mubarak Mosque	coded 114 times.
4	Community of Migration	codes 110 times.
5	Sustainable Development for Al-Mubarak Community	coded 98 times.
6	Community Leadership styles	coded 98 times.
7	Neighbourhood	coded 92 times.
8	Faith matters	coded 88 times.
9	Muslim Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)	coded 72 times.
10	Community Intergenerational Transition	coded 71 times.
11	Community participation & engagement	coded 68 times.
12	STW School	coded 64 times.
13	Sustainable Community Development	coded 63 times.
14	Muslim women	coded 54 times.
15	Community Capacity	coded 41 times.

Figure 9

Fifteen themes as addressed in four findings' chapters



4.9 Summary

The chapter presented the qualitative methods used in my research and highlighted serious ethical issues and sensitivities encountered during my research project. The chapter used a narrative style to blend my research methods and procedures with community members' who engaged in the two initial community engagement and data collection PAR phases, with my personal research journal reflections. Due to the unprecedented COVID 19 pandemic travel restrictions I was unable to return to Thailand

from New Zealand to complete the final two PAR phases, action plan implementation, and assessment/evaluation of my intended research plan. The data analysis process is outlined as the basis for my later findings' chapters. I conclude this method chapter with a note from my fieldwork journals on 20 October 2019.

I have come to this community to pursue my PhD research project with the people of Al-Mubarak. After doing, talking, and interviewing them with all my methods, I found that people could have easily denied my invitation. They have choices to attend to other things in their daily life. But they do accept my invitation, not because I used the best research instruments in this work, but as sister Fatima explained: "I believe that this research can write our stories to our children and the world."

CHAPTER 5: AL-MUBARAK COMMUNITY

This is the first of four chapters covering the findings of my research. This chapter is written in a blended narrative style incorporating the following 3 themes; community of migrants, Al-Mubarak Community and neighbourhood with my fieldwork observation, transect walks and research journal data. It is presented as six major characteristics: a community of living with others, a community of intention, a community of migrants, a community of kinship, a community of opportunity, and a community as neighbourhood.

When I started conducting my fieldwork in Al-Mubarak Community, I saw people actively participating in their community's activities. They acknowledged that Al-Mubarak Community was a decent place where their stories come alive. Their stories made them proud to be part of this community. They felt they belonged.

Al-Mubarak Community is an open Muslim community in the Isan region that provides many opportunities for Muslims and their non-Muslim neighbours to get to know each other. Buddhist neighbours are most welcome to visit regularly or occasionally. Both Muslims and Buddhists have daily contact with each other at shops, the mosque, on roads, in the community hall, at homes or at the school. As the community's Imam Shafei said: "Al-Mubarak Community is, first of all, a special spiritual place for us."

The idea of '*community*', or '*Chumchon*' in Thai, is recognised as having meaning in the lives of all members in Al-Mubarak community. Participants acknowledged that 'community' meant something about their past, their present and the future and that 'community' has various definitions.

Al-Mubarak Community has some fundamental characteristics that enable it to be sustainable and healthy, namely: respect for each other; respect for the elderly and ancestors; a sense of humility; forgiveness as a conflict resolution tool; and care for others regardless of behavioural or educational background. A widow with two children

considered that "Al-Mubarak Community must take care of everyone equitably, regardless of faith affiliation and associations."

The participants believed 'community matters.' Most of them emphasised that:

Community is about a place where people of different backgrounds and places of origin come together with commitment and responsibility in a specific location. Mutual interaction is an essential ingredient for people who are bound to be together. People also need to learn from each other.

When I asked Muslims and Buddhists who participated in a community meeting at Al-Mubarak Mosque to discuss the meaning of community they agreed that one definition was "A community is a small group and probably people should think about how to create a 'meeting point' where everyone feels equal, and that meeting point actually must belong to everyone." Danai, a key member of FEDMIN Foundation noted:

I think I can imagine seeing people in such land or space comprised of many families that settle in the same area and around the place where they live. People are living with the same environment and live up to a specific way of life – the same culture, language and even food culture. People in such a community rely on the reciprocity among them. They also need to share among themselves care and solidarity.

When I asked participants: "What do you think of when you think about the words 'Al-Mubarak Community'?" they responded enthusiastically, and their accounts are presented in the following thematic sections.

5.1 A Community of Living with Others

The Isan region is home to a tiny Muslim community where Muslims have been living with their non-Muslim neighbours since 1900, generally in harmonious circumstances.

Some participants commented that Muslim communities like those in the Isan region are unlikely to appear in other parts of the country. The daily interaction of living together is a crucial factor for both Muslims and non-Muslims in overcoming the barriers that the two cultural communities might feel. 'They are not us.' However, they are all Thais, and Muslims *must* live with their neighbours in the same area – the community, which they called the 'community of the neighbourhood'.

A former Islamic teacher, who used to teach at the mosque, explained:

Muslims have been living in Isan region as its minority. The Muslim community of Ban Nong Muean Thao village is such a small group. They must live together with majority Buddhists. There are many Buddhist festivals in the village such as Buddhist Lent Day, Maghapuja Day, Visakhapuja Day, Tak Bat Thea Wo Day, Asalha Puja Day, Songkran day, the Rocket festival and so on. Muslims have to know what they can do and what they cannot. In my view, living together is a crucial issue that Muslims and other faiths must learn from one other because we are now living in a pluralistic society.

Many Muslim communities in the Isan region have made use of Friday congregational prayer and its Khutbah (sermons) to develop a process of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and other people of different faiths. This is a way in which Muslim communities demonstrate their willingness to live in harmony with others, proving that they are not part of the nation's problems and terrorists within Thai society.

One participant noticed:

Our neighbours were worried about us in the early days of settlement of the Al-Mubarak Community. So, we had to prove ourselves that we were here with kindness and prosperity. At that time, Muslims were not here to bring problems to their village, but they were here to help the village grow and develop. It was not a rosy road in making this community appear in a Buddhist village. Muslims had to work very hard with leaders at the local level. We had to show Buddhist leaders and people that we were not their enemy; we needed some help to build our community as well.

Al-Mubarak's Imam Shafei expressed his view on the Muslim community's presence in the Isan region:

This harmonious atmosphere can, therefore, nurture a sense of trust among Muslims who need to migrate into this region. I can only say that Muslims must take this opportunity to live with others in peace and harmony under a new social context. Muslims must take full responsibility to be a part of this pluralistic setting with others if we want to get some advantages of it.

Since his arrival in the community Imam Shafei has worked at learning to respect and understand Udon Thani province's social context for Muslims. He found the experience of living in Isan different to living in the Deep South region where the majority of people were Muslim. He said "The Udon Thani Muslim community has its own way to practice

religious principles. We cannot compare Muslims here to Muslims in other parts of Thailand."

In the case of Al-Mubarak Community, participants recognised they were removed from their places and families of origin, and that they needed to adjust and work to understand others. There were times when they had to listen to things they did not want to hear. They had to embrace the idea that they are all equal in the community. "We must avoid the feeling 'I am better than you; I am the best only.'" At the same time, an older woman from the first generation of the community, commented that "Muslims cannot live alone. Such a mutual connection between both Muslim and Buddhist sides is inevitably imperative. Al-Mubarak Community should be thinking about itself beyond its area. Muslims should act as friendly neighbours in the community. The Muslim community cannot be in isolation from the broader community."

Participants suggested Al-Mubarak Community could not survive if they believed that people around them were all totally hostile. The Al-Mubarak Community which had initially relied on a courageous spirit should in the long -run think beyond itself and identify as being part of the greater community.

A Muslim activist, visiting from Udon Thani city, attended a community focus group and commented:

Personally speaking, this community is where many households settle down close to each other. The community does not require that all members keep the same faith. They can be different in faiths and thoughts. As far as I can tell, such a case is Udon Thani Central Mosque in downtown; it is surrounded with Buddhist homes and buildings. That Muslim community has been in the inner city encompassed with a Buddhist temple. Still, that community has an Islamic learning centre operated by the mosque, which is beneficial to Muslims. I live in that community, and I witness that Muslims have lived with others harmoniously.

During a community meeting, Muslim and Buddhist participants acknowledged that Al-Mubarak Community existed in a broader Buddhist community. All its members have come from different places of origin – Bangkok, the central region, and other parts of the

Isan region. They have settled and built this community along with healthy Muslim organisations such as FEDMIN Foundation, Al-Mubarak Mosque, the SWT School, the Isan Mualaf Club, and other forms of social service – the community health station and so forth. Unlike Muslim communities in the southern region where Muslims live as the majority, Muslims in the Isan region, by contrast, have lived as a tiny minority within a broader Buddhist community. Isan Muslims, therefore, need to understand this real situation in detail. Aminah said “We all dream of building a community where all belong to it. Right now, the community is in the back area of Ban Nong Muean Thao village, a majority-friendly Buddhist village.”

A Muslim mother of three children stated:

It seems to me that we, as a minority, should learn as much as from majority groups in society. Imagine! When we are the majority group like we are in Deep South Thailand, we pay little attention to other minority communities. Meanwhile, the Buddhist community can take this unique opportunity to learn about why Muslims do things in their daily lives. Such a reciprocal relationship is vital in making solidarity among the minority and the majority in society.

A Buddhist woman neighbour who often visits Al-Mubarak Community, suggested:

Al-Mubarak Community should not be just a 'community' for Muslims, but also for other people of different faiths who would benefit from the growth of this Muslim community. Hence, this particular community must embrace all people of different faiths to join and be part of its positive development. I think Al-Mubarak Community has some future. It will be a significant community in the Isan region where Muslims and their neighbours can live and learn together.

Fareeda noted:

I consider that our community must be based on mutual interaction between members and neighbours; we must help and even support each other. We have a sense of kindness, care for each other. Our same faith becomes, therefore, a constant bond to all members.

Jamilah remarked:

Al-Mubarak Community is a new community that happened in a Buddhist majority environment in the Isan region. Its existence might be in a different situation from the majority of Muslim communities from other areas. This community has been fundamentally built on the mutual understanding of people of different faiths who have lived together regardless of faith affiliations. So, no harm comes to others.

Apirat said:

Al-Mubarak Community must therefore respond to the people of different faiths more and more. We cannot have impunity from social change and international realities. Muslims must expose their kindness and moral deeds to their friends. I have something to tell you that our next-door neighbours are closely observing our actions and behaviours. They are watching what we practice, and what we do at the mosque and in the community. They pay more attention to us. So, please do not harm others. Be kind to them.

Fatimah shared a story about dealing with discrimination:

May I tell you a story of mine. I remembered once I went to the Administrative Office of Kumphawapi District, Udon Thani province, to get a personal identification (ID) card. At that time, an assistant district officer asked me 'Why do you wear Hijab; this is Thailand, so please take it off if you want to get your ID card?' I suddenly replied: 'Why you ask me about this stupid question even though our law allows me to do so, I am abiding by the law of this country, or the law has not yet arrived at the office?'

A photographer then said: 'I will first take a photo for your ID card. If you get some problems, please come here to see me again.' I told him 'Today, Thailand is open to recognising the diversity of religions, including Islam more than ever before.' I feel we are so lucky at least. In my case, I have gone through difficult times, fighting against injustice for my village. I used to lead people in my village to take care of ourselves. As traders and vendors in a small market, my friends and I set up an informal club for justice among our members of that market. Indeed, everyone knew that I am a Muslim, but they accepted my role for them. I think we as Muslims must do things for others, not for ourselves merely.

Khadijah offered her perspective on a definition of 'community'. "Community must be comprised of peaceful coexistence among all its members. Most importantly, each and every one must do the best for her or his community as a pure place where they can have a bright future all together."

A Buddhist participant saw 'community' as an equal space for living together. "We have majority Buddhism, Islam and some new settler families who practice Sekai Kyuseikyo. She explained that "Sekai Kyuseikyo is a functional religious belief adapted from Mahayana Buddhism, Shintoism, and general ethics in Japan, known as "Yore ", in Thai society. In my perception, "Yore" is different from Buddhism that majority of Thais practice regularly."

I observed that some people have attempted to encourage others to be open-minded and work together for the well-being of the whole community. At the local level, there are various groups with Buddhist and Muslim members, such as the Women Development Group, Village Health Volunteers (VHV), Aerobic Sports Group and others. These community groups are aimed at supporting and enabling the well-being of and quality of life for the villagers. One older woman in the village stated:

Well-being must be provided as the ultimate goal to attain at the community level. Religiously, my understanding about a community that can create a well-being system is a community where people often use socially religious services from the mosque, which is a holy place where they feel comfortable to come and join all exercises contributed by the mosque.

Apirat, who has been an advocate for peaceful coexistence building between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Isan region, shared his view on the well-being issue:

People of other faiths have a sense of security and well-being to build their homes close to the Muslim area. Both sides have trust in each other, and our well-being will come because we have no fear to live with others. What I want from you as a researcher is, please spread our stories about what we are in this community to the broader society and New Zealand where you are studying.

5.2 A Community of Intention

Al-Mubarak Community developed from the desire and intention of Hajji Haroon Samadeh, the first Muslim who migrated from Udon Thani city. He was determined to assemble fellow Muslims from several parts of Udon Thani province and nearby areas to build an organisation where Muslims could join and freely partake in religious rituals in their own community. This community has since given birth to a foundation, a mosque, a school, and a women's club – each organisation deliberately formed as part of the well-planned vision of the community's founders and members.

Al-Mubarak Community has been built as an intentional community by its first-generation founders with a purposeful vision of Muslims living alongside their neighbours in a friendly environment. The community's founders committed and dedicated themselves

to developing a well-organised, planned community which worked in cooperation with others. Khadijah recalled that “This community was built by members who had a strong intention to initially make this community conceivable with Muslims' support from throughout the country.”

Participants affirmed they planned to make a safer and more pleasant place for their lives and their children. Their intention was to migrate and settle their homes in the area.

One older man who had just converted to Islam said that he had observed his sister, a converted Muslim woman, living in this community for decades. He was so pleased his sister could do good deeds for members of the community and her neighbours. Because of her good manner, he decided to convert to what she believed, without any compulsion from her. He noted:

But I am still uncomfortable to engage with other people in the community altogether. I thought my self is not perfect yet, so I am determined not to go to the mosque to pray collectively. Let me have time to understand Islam more.

One Muslim woman from the second generation in Al-Mubarak Community explained her perception about her community settlement. “Hajji Haroon Samadeh was a visionary Muslim leader. Buddhist neighbours highly respected and admired him. Sometimes, they had problems, and he could give them useful solutions.”

Most people of Al-Mubarak Community strongly believed in the common goal of coming together to create a place where their future flourished. Participants, particularly from the first generation, had the most confidence in developing a clear intention to build their new community. Some of them considered that the most important aspect of working together for community development was this original intentionality. Participants from both the first and second generations said that they intended to build such a community of faith for everyone who wanted to join and create a better future together.

Participants had no doubt that Al-Mubarak Community was an intentional community. Imam Shafei stated:” Our success is substantially dependent on the initial intention that

we had when we decided to settle in this area. Whatever we do has relied on our first intention. It is fundamentally important to our life.”

From the participants' perspective, this community has been a community of intention. It had come from a tiny group of faithful people who wanted to please Almighty God: they were committed to serving Him and doing good for all community members. Fatimah addressed that point:

We maintain our intention of hope and faith as a reality. It is okay if we are not all moving in the same direction sometimes. I consider that we have a common, concrete purpose, but just different ideas about growing and sustaining this community for the future. I truly sense that some people go to the mosque just to pray only. How many of us are thinking about our mosque, which is an integral part of our community? This community is a new community for us. Our intention and wish to work for our faith are a driving force to bring us together.

5.3 A Community of Migrants

Al-Mubarak Community's diversified membership is considered one of the essential characteristics of its development. As Imam Shafei recognised “All Al-Mubarak Community members are so different and diverse. Diversity of people – different nations and languages – is our strength. A sense of belonging has made us ‘the People of Al-Mubarak’.”

Al-Mubarak is a vital and active community with people from different backgrounds and all walks of life; public servants, lecturers, soldiers, businessmen, farmers, and others. The members of Al-Mubarak Community adhere to the same faith but have different places of origin. They brought their behaviours and practices from their native communities into this particular community.

Those differences could have been a tremendous obstacle for the development process. However, they were willing to engage with diversity, and adjust their behaviours to understand others. Hamidah reflected:

I settled down in this community after the arrival of Hajji Haroon Samadeh. It seemed to me that I was afraid to be here at that time. Since then, I have learned the behaviours and attitudes of my neighbours and my friends in this community and the village. I always thought about how to live with others with happiness. Yes, I am not going to lie. There are members who prefer food differently. Some might like spicy, but my family likes food flavourless. Our Imam does not eat meat. We have come from different places and families. So, we must accept others' different community behaviours even the food we eat it differently.

I often observed that the community was willing to engage with women in the community's affairs through all its organisations. Women have been the most valuable human capital for the entire process of Al-Mubarak Community's development.

People often state that 'Al-Mubarak Community means a 'community of migrants'. It has become one of the characteristics of this community. From the first generation to the third generation, people have been moving around all the time. Thai people and some foreigners have decided to settle down in this area, including Buddhist neighbours who had migrated to Ban Nong Muean Thao village before their Muslim fellows. It is a beautiful feature of Thai society that people can be free to seek a better life in the Kingdom of Thailand. Imam Shafei, who emigrated from southern Thailand, recognised that "Al-Mubarak Community is a community of migrants. All of us have emigrated from other parts throughout the country."

'The People of Al-Mubarak' emigrated from different parts of the Isan region and other parts of Thailand and built this community despite differences in background – families, places of origin, careers and so forth. Khadijah, from the first generation of this community, affirmed that "We are a community of opportunity for Thai and foreign Muslims who need to seek a place to live in."

One settler, who came from the southern region, said "I wanted to be part of this community and doing what I can do for the betterment of Al-Mubarak Community. I am going to find out any potential ways to help and reflect that my collaboration with foreign countries would help this community's sustainability in the future."

Likewise, Jamilah explained “Our community comprises people who are diverse in different capacities, potential, experiences, and knowledge. This point becomes our strength. But we must share those things we have among our members in the community.

Buddhist neighbours noted that their forebears had also emigrated, but long ago from other areas. In more recent times, most Buddhists were born in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. Some participants from the Aerobic Sports Group, the Group of Angel, illustrated this point. “Most of us were born in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. Some were born in Ban Khaow Sarn village, a neighbouring village. Some people migrated from other areas such as Khon Kaen province and other parts of Udon Thani province.”

During the transect walks, the participants and I decided to Figure out the various birthplaces where Al-Mubarak Community members were born and raised before entering this community. We discovered that ‘The People of Al-Mubarak’ have emigrated from the following provinces: Bangkok (the capital city), Ang Thong and Ayutthaya provinces (Central region), Phetchabun, Lampang, Phichit, and Pharae provinces (Northern region), Narathiwat, Trang, Phattalung, and Songkhla (Southern region), Khon Kaen, Udon Thani (downtown or other districts), Roi Et, Kalasin, Nong Khai, Loei, Mukdahan, and Chaiyaphum provinces (Isan region) and Chachoengsao (Eastern region). See Figure 8 for provincial origins of Al-Mubarak members.

One finding was the number of community members who were from foreign countries, including Indonesia, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Pakistan, England, Germany, Sweden, Yemen, Kuwait, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates (Dubai), and Turkey. These people had moved to the community as extended family members.

Hamida remarked:

Now, we have a new family member of our community. The wife is from Indonesia, and the husband is an Isan local converted. They are now dedicating themselves to the mosque's affairs daily. They have become notable advocates of Al-Mubarak Mosque. They help clean the mosque and its area and fix stuff every day. We are so glad to have them with us.

5.4 A Community of Kinship

Kinship has become a vital characteristic of Al-Mubarak Community. This is built on the relationships between families whose members and relatives are the bedrock of this community.

Physically, Al-Mubarak Community has linked each home in the settlement. The homes are not isolated, the opposite of some housing development projects. A community has been built as a 'community of kinship.' Hamidah reflected that "Our community has a closeness among people who live in the same area along with a dynamic of a shared relationship."

As a brother, I observed that people acknowledged one another when they worked together in their community. They were brothers and sisters in Islam even when they had not known one another previously and were not relatives and families. They feel that sense of family among themselves.

One woman working for the Udon Thani Hospital expressed her feelings about 'Muslim family'. "I just came to be a new member of this Al-Mubarak Community a few months ago. But it gave me an incredible moment for working with friends here. I really feel that we are united and happy. We always offer a big hug to each other when we meet at all times."

Some participants emphasised that the idea of kinship requires looking beyond the confined area of Al-Mubarak Community. People who lived in different districts of Udon Thani province are counted as brothers and sisters and have used the services provided by the community and the mosque as much as others.

For instance, when the mosque did the Qurbani meat (the ritual sacrifice of a livestock animal during Eid al-Adha Day), people distributed this among all Al-Mubarak people, whether they lived near the mosque or far away, and included our recent incoming brothers and sisters from neighbouring counties e.g., Rohingyas from Myanmar. Imam Shafei said “All people deserve it. All of us are brothers and sisters of Al-Mubarak Community. If the Qurbani meat has reached all families, those families are an integral part of Al-Mubarak Community. Hence, Al-Mubarak Community is not about just a specific area but a family of Muslim believers.”

I still remember how, in a mosque meeting, all members discussed how to support Rohingyas who lived in Udon Thani province. There would be a big celebration of Eid day for all Muslims around the world. Those Rohingyas would join our community. The mosque had to prepare to provide them with a variety of food, including the Qurbani meal. The meeting decided to support and embrace 50 Rohingyas to join the Eid ceremony. I observed that the mosque members gave one powerful reason for that meeting: “Because they are our brothers and sisters in Islam, the mosque cannot leave them behind. We must take care of them too.”

People have built a community environment based on their soul and spirituality, not materialism. Participants wanted a unique environment of respect for others, kindness and a neighbourhood which is about more than just having new buildings and constructions. They all had to consider what they wished to find in our community.

One driving instructor shared his experience of kinship with me. "I feel comfortable when I am here. Kru Haroon and other members tried to convey a sense of shared belonging to others. They also shared some common feelings of love and compassion, and we all felt that we belonged to this particular community."

On kinship connection, I observed that the relationship among all community members' relatives was a crucial factor that makes Al-Mubarak community development sustainable and possible. People were pleased to fully support all activities and projects of this community through their relatives who lived in the community.

5.5 A Community of Opportunity

From the very beginning, Al-Mubarak Community was based on the idea that it had the potential to act as a pilot scheme for other Muslim communities in other areas of the Isan region. In 2004, the FEDMIN Foundation was keen to introduce this project to Thai society. Preeda, the current president of FEDMIN Foundation, said:

FEDMIN Foundation intends to build Al-Mubarak Community for all people who want to make a community which can offer people a better life. FEDMIN Foundation hopes to establish a training centre for human resource development and skilled workforces, a community information centre, a community library, and an agricultural cooperative in Al-Mubarak Community area. Those projects will help people getting a better opportunity for their lives.

I interviewed a new family who had just decided to settle into their new home in Al-Mubarak Community in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. They acknowledged that there were many opportunities this community could provide for them, such as an Islamic environment, better jobs, and quality of life. Khadijah commented that "We have made Al-Mubarak Community 'a community of opportunity' for both Thai Muslims and others who need to seek a place to live."

I observed that all community projects were having beneficial impacts on people's lives, directly and indirectly. For instance, the STW School provided many opportunities for people to get jobs, obtain a better education and a place where Muslims and friends can

get to know each other. Some participants recognised that the school gave Muslim children an excellent opportunity to go to a school locally. Students have a safe place surrounded by paddy fields, far away from main roads. Fareeda, one of the school committee members, said “Look! If we did not have this school in our community, we must send our children to another school outside our community. Children might be away from our culture and environment. But the STW School provides and holds such culture, quality education and the environment we should be proud of.”

The STW School grants annual scholarships to Muslim students and to some of other faiths. The entire community and the village benefit from this initiative. The STW School also provides “Zakat “(Muslim obligatory almsgiving) for low-income or poor families so that they get the opportunity to send their children to the STW School without any tuition fee.

Participants accepted that Al-Mubarak Community and its organisations had to keep fully supporting their new members who needed food, homes, and opportunities to seek a better job. One of the beneficiaries from the Zakat project initiated by FEDMIN Foundation, said:

I am getting old enough to witness that this community is essentially a community of opportunity. Literally, temples or mosques are suitable places at my age to connect for the rest of my life. I am preparing myself before I die like many other elders. God's mercy blesses me. I got more opportunities to do many things in life. I think Al-Mubarak Community has provided my family with an opportunity to seek a better life in this world and the hereafter. On the other hand, I intend to use the rest of my life to support and afford help to others who demand what I can deliver or contribute to them. I think there is room for me to do this in this community.

Khadijah regarded this community as having given her a vast opportunity to engage with its development process. She proudly states:

I could work closely with various organisations in this community as an individual, whether FEDMIN Foundation, the Isan Mualaf Club or Al-Mubarak Mosque. I consider that those organisations have also recognised my roles as an elder. I think they never left us behind. I can voluntarily participate in many exercises organised by those organisations. As a converted Muslim of 50 years, I am proud to be part of this community even as I turn 76 years old.

Job creation was a serious topic that all community organisations raised. These groups have long attempted to promote employment opportunities, whether the Zakat project or occupational training. However, the community has faced challenging conditions such as a shortage of funding, difficult market conditions and a lack of saleable community products which could help maintain and secure jobs for their members.

Fatimah indicated that “The economic aspect of community development is the most relevant factor in sustaining our community.” Khadijah added “It is so difficult to create jobs overnight. I want to see Halal food services with good quality – Halal shops, and food delivery – occur in our area, which I think could create more jobs for our members who are in need.”

During my fieldwork period, in August 2019, Al-Mubarak Community hosted a wedding ceremony between Mrs Fatima Mat-Aree, an active member of the community (and a converted Muslim woman) and Mr Manot Pathan, a Pathan Muslim from Kalasin province. Their wedding ceremony called “Nikah” (an Arabic term) was held at the Al-Mubarak Mosque led by the Imam of the mosque while the rest of the guests and audience were witnesses. The mosque was open to Muslims and non-Muslims to participate in the ceremony. Both men and women could come in and join the celebration in the separate spaces provided and they could see each other without any curtain or barrier.

After the religious rites inside the mosque, all guests and audience members mingled and had lunch together. Some women members of the community provided food for all. One attendee of the wedding stated that the wedding ceremony marked a momentous occasion that could support Al-Mubarak Community in reaching out to make a far-reaching community network and partnership. The family networks, through marriage, had become important to community development. The new groom's family and relatives have now become a part of the community, visiting occasionally, and thinking about how

they might participate in community activities. Al-Mubarak Mosque as an area of public interaction would benefit from this new couple.

A community that can improve and sustain itself means its people or members never stop thinking about and moving forward on a "path of development" and discovering ways to diminish communal problems by using their own abilities and taking responsibility. Danai, the Vice-president of FEDMIN Foundation illustrated this:

This community must acknowledge that there are core values – humility, perseverance, forgiveness, including compassion – that must be an integral part of its community development. I am convinced that there will be a potential path for this community to uplift all its members' quality of life spiritually and physically.

In the central area of Al-Mubarak Community, there are 15 Muslim families clustered near each other. They have initiated three organisations and one mosque. Fatimah said "It is fantastic. I think this community might be the only Muslim community that can do this in Thailand." I found that she was impressed that some of the first generation were still active and proactive in working with those organisations in the same area. They desired to build and improve their community through organisations which were relevant to their lives. She added "It is an excellent contribution of ours to the Isan region as a whole."

Participants from a focus group with Muslim women as well as Apirat, Khadijah and Muslimah testified that Al-Mubarak Community had become a functioning centre for Muslims' affairs in the Isan region.

5.6 A Community as Neighbourhood

My participants recognised the constructive role of the Thai neighbourhood construct of *Pheūoenbān* had been a crucial key to making Al-Mubarak Community's development sustainable. Hamidah was clear, "Al-Mubarak Community cannot stand firmly for the future without the help and support from our neighbours. They are more important to us than we imagined".

Participants considered being Muslims in Ban Nong Muean Thao village was a privilege. In a focus group for Muslim women, one mother described villagers as “very kind and moderate.”

During a transect walk with the first generation of Al-Mubarak Community, when participants went across the land upon which the FEDMIN Foundation and the Muslim homes were built, Aminah reflected on her views on the neighbourhood, saying:

We have a good relationship with our neighbours since my family decided to settle down in this village. Our Buddhist neighbours are kind to sell their land for us. Now, the entire Muslim area used to belong to our Buddhist friends.

Participants acknowledged that the Muslim community needed to examine the ways or strategies they used in making relationships with other communities on the ground. Preeda indicated that “The daily interaction and relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims remain critically relevant to community building. We all have to overcome obstacles when the two cultural communities feel difficult to be together as neighbours.”

Some participants like Dawan and Mariam observed that Buddhists and Muslims interacted and talked to each other in Ban Nong Muean Thao village daily. Both sides went to visit each other’s homes regularly. Some Buddhists came often to sell their products like vegetables and dried fish to their Muslim friends and, at the same time, Muslims opened their shops to sell food for their Buddhist fellows. Khadijah reflected on her experience of neighbourhood building, saying:

Neighbourhood building is critically necessary to keep the relationship between Muslims and Buddhists in this village. So often, my Buddhist friends are likely to sell their vegetables and fishes for us. They carry their products by motorcycles. We also buy drinking water and consumer goods from our Buddhist shops. Our children like to eat ice-cream from them too.

More specifically, participants have distinguished the well-defined characteristics of the neighbourhood in the process of Al-Mubarak Community's development namely: fostering robust relationships and acknowledging the different ways of life.

5.6.1 *Fostering Robust Relationships*

Many participants recognised that love and compassion had been the core elements of the Al-Mubarak Community, where its people were from diverse educational and career backgrounds. They also reaffirmed that the community must be built on love and compassion among all its members. The neighbours therefore also had a right to taste the love and compassion embedded in this community. Sarfar shared his opinion on love and compassion, remarking:

In my view, Islam is a religion that holds love and compassion. We should commence at this specific point. Love and compassion both are essential to our daily lives. We all have the religious duty of God to do so. We must carry on that love and compassion with the work for our community development, whether we are Muslims or other religious people.

One man acknowledged that “A robust and reciprocal relationship is vital in making solidarity among the minority and majority in society”. One Buddhist woman from the Aerobics’ Group described the healthy and robust relationships between Buddhists and Muslims in Ban Nong Muean Thao village that are brought about through this sport, which provides a solid foundation for bringing people together. The Aerobics’ Group also expands into other activities, for example visiting members’ homes, cleaning schools, supporting cremations, and helping in the temples and mosque in general. This sports initiative is an active group where Buddhist and Muslim women have an excellent opportunity to be close to each other. She also stressed that:

We are all the people, regardless of whether we are Buddhists or Muslims, who have something in common, which is called a 'Volunteer Spirit'. We can do things because of this very spirit. It is important if we want to change the community by sympathising with others. That is in all our minds. We love this village; we want it to be a better place for all. We must start with what we do now.

Fareeda observed the significance of love and compassion in Al-Mubarak Community’s development, saying “If you give people your love and compassion, God will grant you with His love and compassion more than you give others by far.”

In a focus group for Buddhist women, one farmer carefully stressed that “Muslims never make us feel insecure and uncomfortable. We each live in our own area, but we help each other in what we can do for the village and community as a whole.

Imam Shafei recently met with ‘Grandmother Learn’, a Buddhist, on the public main road of the community. She was a very familiar neighbour as her home was located in front of Al-Mubarak Community and she had been familiar with all Muslim members since the community was first established. She said to the Imam ‘I heard that you are going back to the south.’ ‘No, not now, it maybe four or five years from now’ the Imam replied. She said, ‘Never hurry up; please stay here long. You are here, and many good things happened in this community.’ She told the Imam right away. Hamidah also noted:

Yai Learn is likely keen to help and support all activities that we do. She is very close to us since we built this community. Occasionally, she likes to wear the Hijab and helps us make local food – papaya salad or ‘Som Tam’ (in Thai), one of the most popular Thai cuisines, at our events at the mosque and our other organisations. We feel so lucky and grateful that she is our generous supporter and neighbour. Yes, we trust and love her most.

5.6.2 Acknowledging the Different Ways of Life

Khadijah shared her observations on what her Buddhist neighbours did in their daily lives in the village, remarking that the local people mutually preferred joy and happiness. They typically liked singing songs and listening to all kinds of music, particularly the Isan local songs, in all ceremonies and festivals. She noted that sometimes the music and songs from her Buddhist neighbours were noisy and spread into the entire village. But nobody made a demand for it to stop. Khadijah said:

We do not consider that our Buddhist neighbours are making problems. Yes, I might feel that it is very noisy at night. But it is not every day. People of the village have celebrated their weddings and other social festivals. They like singing and songs. We are here for decades, and we do realise they have their own way of life like us.

At the same time, Apirat, from the first Muslim generation, commented that: “I understand what local people are doing. They like to make their lives happy and joyous with music

and singing. We just have to be patient, and tomorrow morning everything is going to be normal.

Participants likewise indicated that the Muslim Buddhist communities have different ways of life socially and in their religious practices. They showed that the ways of life required understanding and being patient with each other. A former subdistrict headman, a Buddhist who had experienced working in a majority Muslim country, said:

I had lived and worked in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for years. I perceived that Muslims are generally kind and gentle, particularly Muslims in our village whom I have known since they had settled in our village. They are active in their activities in their community area in particular. They do pray five times a day and often go to the mosque they built. I never heard that they ever made problems for us. I often supported and worked with them.

One Buddhist woman representing the Village Health Volunteers (the VHV Group) perceived that the voice of the Adhan, the Islamic call to prayer, at Al-Mubarak Mosque had sometimes annoyed her, particularly in the morning as it disturbed the sleep of the villagers. After this issue was raised for discussion in the village, the mosque had promptly responded by reducing the volume, so it covered only the Muslim residential area. She also added “The voice of the Adhan, through a loudspeaker, was turned down for awakening the particular Muslim community area. Now, we feel satisfied that both sides have solved this issue and appreciate each other.”

One committee member of Al-Mubarak Mosque stated that the voice was indeed a blessing from God Almighty waking people up early every morning, but the sound might be impacting on the lives of people in the village. Therefore, the committee of Al-Mubarak Mosque had to carefully listen to and acknowledge a request from them.

In a focus group for Muslims and Buddhists held at Al-Mubarak Mosque, all participants kept silent for two minutes, while the Adhan called the Asr prayer (afternoon prayer), the third of the five daily prayers. At that particular meeting, some participants immediately raised a significant issue of understanding among themselves. One Muslim trader noted that Muslims realised that every Buddhist Holy Day, all butcher’s shops had

closed all day because Muslims respected their Buddhist neighbours' belief. In the markets, those Muslim butchers would never slaughter cattle on those Holy Buddhist Days. He continued, explaining:

Learning more about our neighbours' ways of life is an essential key to understanding and respecting them. Unlike the Muslim communities in the southern region where Muslims live as its majority, here we are living as a tiny Muslim community along with a broader Buddhist community in the Isan region. The Muslims live among their Buddhist neighbours. We all need to understand this real phenomenon considerably.

Somjit indicated her way of life as a devout Buddhist, saying "We practice culturally religious rituals, for example, the festival of the Tenth Lunar Month, which is held from the first waning-moon night to the 15th waning-moon night every September. It is about paying respect to our deceased ancestors.

A butcher, who was a converted Muslim, commented that the Buddhist community should take this opportunity to learn about the Muslims' way of life. He had a Buddhist sister who recently visited the community. She told her Muslim brother that she felt good when she was with people in Al-Mubarak Community. His family had participated in many activities at Al-Mubarak Mosque to learn about Al-Mubarak Community's environment and its people. He said, "Such a reciprocal relationship is vital in making a solidarity among the minority and the majority in society."

Khadijah also explained:

It is tough to tell our neighbours to stop taking care of their pets – dogs. They have the right to really look after their dogs in their residential area. Sometimes, their dogs come across in my area. As a Muslim living in a majority Buddhist village, I have to understand the different way of life we are all adhering to. I have also to be patient. And once I should share with my neighbours on this matter.

Fatimah stated her experience, observing:

Our neighbours never doubted our Muslim identity – wearing Hijab – anymore. Hence, Muslims have had extraordinary opportunities for developing the community until where we are right now. Luckily, we can have the right to build a school, a road, a mosque, and other facilities which with what we built have supported to make this village known and growing.

Dawan said:

I have experienced that Muslims are so different. Muslims who live in the south differ from Muslims who live in the Isan region. Many Muslims in the south are kind and hospitable. We cannot stereotype all Muslims are the same. No. They are not. We do not have Christian people in the village, but there is a small church that located in a nearby village. We do not have problems with any religions our neighbours profess.

One young Buddhist footballer from the Udon Thani Muslim Football Club said:

I have never seen any conflicts among faith communities, even though we are so close to each other. On the other hand, we might have seen some conflicts or disputes in other regions. I think that one of the reasons is that 'Buddhist and Muslims are all 'Khon Isan' – local Isan people – alike. My Muslim friends whom I know are moderate, kind, and compassionate. They like to serve others in need. They always smile when they meet with each other. I recognise what they are.

Apirat and Prathin commented that Al-Mubarak Community's appearance had never been a burden or obstacle to its neighbours. In his view, a Muslim community's presence could help this village's reputation to be recognised by a broader public both in Udon Thani province and beyond. Apirat stated:

Muslims and Buddhists both respect each other. I once heard a former village chief of Ban Nong Muean Thao village say, ' We appreciate you are here. We should take care of your community more than what we do.'

Dawan and Prathin attended the grand opening ceremony of Al-Mubarak Mosque and commented on the event. Dawan said "We are so happy to welcome Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Wan Mohamad Noor Matha, state officials and other people visiting our place. We all acknowledge that Muslims can build their community's mosque.

The current village chief of Ban Nong Muean Thao village, Mother of Lotus or Maē Būa (a Thai name), a Buddhist, tried hard to develop and enhance the wellbeing of all people of the village. She was seriously concerned about the future of her village and hoped to see that people of different faiths could live together as one family.

pointed out:

As a leader, I have tried my best to protect and treat all the village members equally as members of the same family. Everyone knows one another. We live in the same village; Buddhist and Muslims are all my dear members in this village. I indeed salute and acknowledge the contributions they have given for the sake of the entire village.

5.7 Summary

All 1 participants understood the defining characteristics of Al-Mubarak Community differently but acknowledged that the Al-Mubarak Community is meaningful to their lives and their future, whether they are the first, second or third generations of the Muslim community in the Isan region. Most Muslims and Buddhists believe that Al-Mubarak Community provides a constructive framework for living together as neighbours and want to make the most of this opportunity to improve their lives.

Al-Mubarak Community has played a constructive role in bringing people of different faiths together and opening this window of opportunity – jobs, quality education and an inclusive community - for the incoming members from other parts of Thailand and elsewhere overseas. However, the Muslim community is always interested in reviewing the ways they do things and the policies they implement in working to create strong and healthy relationships with other faith communities on the ground. Therefore, the bounty of the Al-Mubarak Community is always to welcome and embrace other people to join and belong. Kinship, familial and religious, are among community members are core ingredients that hold this community solid and bonded together.

The sense of a neighbourhood shared between Muslims and Buddhists has played a constructive role in enabling Al-Mubarak Community to move forward sustainably and significantly. Neighbourhood is a solid foundation for the future of Al-Mubarak Community. As Hamidah said about neighbourhood “Al-Mubarak Community cannot stand firmly for the future without the help and support from our neighbours. They are more important than we imagined.” Many participants commented that Muslims cannot

live alone and should think beyond themselves and their own area and act as friends for their neighbours around the community.

The Muslim community cannot be in isolation from the broader community. Most importantly, Al-Mubarak Community has been built on the clear intention foreseen by its first generation which intended the tiny Muslim community to live together with majority Buddhist communities in the Isan region in peace and harmony.

CHAPTER 6: FAITH MATTERS

This chapter demonstrates how faith matters to Al-Mubarak Community's development and to its members. This chapter is written in a blended narrative style incorporating the following 6 themes; faith matters, Muslim women, STW School, Al-Mubarak Mosque, community leadership styles and MFBOs with my fieldwork observation, transect walks and research journal data. It shows how the holding of faith values can provide for confidence-building among the members of the Al-Mubarak Community. It also attests to the vital role of Muslim women who apply faith values to advocate for themselves and for a better community where they live and belong. The chapter then goes on to explore the leadership styles of the Al-Mubarak community and, finally, the unique characteristics of Muslim Faith-based Organizations (MFBOs) in community development processes and practice

6.1 How Faith Matters

Participants reflected on the unique role faith plays in the way that "it matters to their lives". One mother of three children noted that "Faith can provide for confidence-building among the members of the community."

Fareeda expressed her view about faith, observing:

Faith provides us with a framework of human relationship so that we can somehow use it rightly. In doing so, we all must rethink what we have done in life. Do we understand that framework of human relationship and that relationship between Almighty God and us? Which way do we communicate with friends/neighbours in order to please Almighty God only? These questions are required in our daily lives at this time. Now, my only single intention is to please Almighty God by being a good Muslim and working for others with my sincerity. I have no time to receive any honours or credits from people but only from God. Accepting this was the most significant turning point of my life, but I felt relieved for some reason.

Some participants also addressed the fact that conflicts related to faiths or religions occurred around the world and that "religion is the most immeasurable reason for all conflicting parties. In Isan region, the religious matter has undoubtedly raised public involvement. People are commonly sensitive to it."

I asked participants: "How does faith matter in your lives?" Participants responded positively to this inquiry with much confidence. They classified some of the following distinct characteristics of how faith matters.

6.1.1 Faith Holding People Together

Fatimah said: "No doubt, our religion is, first of all, the anchor to hold this community steady and robust. Our faith has indeed driven us together and made a positive difference for a better life and society."

In the case of Al-Mubarak Community, faith is linked to charitable activities. People have all given to Al-Mubarak Mosque's charity as part of the practice of their professed faith.

There is a strong connection between faith and charity in Al-Mubarak Community. Participants regarded faith, in their hearts, as something that could drive all activities and practices forward. Charitable giving is an indispensable element of all programmes and activities of the mosque, providing necessary funds for all its affairs. On the issue of the connection between faith and charity, Imam Shafei said:

I am convinced that faith is the fundamental principle of all donors and supports persons in their charitable endeavours. Whether you are rich, or you are weak, you can do something for improving the society you live in if you are faithful.

For instance, Al-Mubarak Mosque manages a weekend class for children and needed at least 100 Baht (about NZ \$5)) per month from members for this particular project.

There was no compulsion to make donations in Al-Mubarak Community. Instead, donations depended on members' readiness and sincerity. Imam Shafei noted:

If you do not have enough money to donate, you just at least make your prayer for us to achieve this project together. Our children, eventually, benefit from it. Charity is, nonetheless, a lasting test for our faith and its ultimate advantage is about participation in our community through charitable affairs.

Al-Mubarak Mosque welcomes all brothers and sisters who want to visit our community.

Al-Mubarak Mosque opens its doors to welcome people in need 24/7 without any payment.

Visitors from many areas frequently visit Al-Mubarak Mosque. If some are pleased to donate, the mosque always encourages them to gift their money to the mosque directly and put money into mosque donation boxes, rather than donate through the Imam. People can also donate to Al-Mubarak Mosque activities through its Facebook page and Line-Group. People who came to Al-Mubarak Mosque gain recognition as recipients and donors (contributors).

Al-Mubarak Mosque also collects money through a Friday donation from local members and visitors who come for Friday congregational prayer. Each Friday, the mosque receives about 1,000 - 1,100 Baht (50-55 NZD). Sometimes people donate to support special activities and programmes. The mosque also receives some money from the donation box, roughly 3,500-4,000 Baht (175-200 NZD) every month.

In 2019, Al-Mubarak Mosque launched its "one Baht per day initiative" which tried to encourage its members to save their money for the affairs of the mosque. This initiative ran very well in the beginning, but now few members remain active in it.

In relation to charitable affairs, Imam Shafei said that transparent processes were necessary. He noted "I can share with you that all money is transferred to the mosque's banking account. We want to be transparent on this issue. The mosque has a monthly financial report to all members." He said, "As a strong believer, I do believe in charity and social devotion, which is a fundamental element of community participation."

One older woman who got involved in Al-Mubarak Mosque's food provision commented:

I would say that to do meritorious things or to donate some money to charity for the mosque is most valuable than other Islamic organisations. So, we would perceive people would be most content with participation in the works of the mosque because they believe that Almighty God will grant them His rewards directly. Hence, our mosque has many works to do with its process of transparency and management. Our work is around financial matters or other concrete activities.

6.1.2 Faith as Crucial Part of Public Life

One mother of two boys stated: "Honestly, I believe that faith is a crucial part of our life and the heart of our community." This was a robust statement that made me think about how faith is part of our public life.

Participants were confident in showing what they believe through their dress and daily practice. They believe they have the right to articulate their faith in public life with righteous actions for the sake of the whole society.

Muslim women participants always wore hijab, an Islamic female dress. Wherever these women appear in public spaces, whether in the mosque, at markets, meetings, or on the streets they appear with their hijabs and show their faces. One Muslim teacher explained:

Almighty Allah designs hijab for Muslim women. When I wear it, I feel I am close to Him. At the same time, hijab signifies our integrity in public life. I don't feel I face a problem wearing hijab in the public area. I did it when I was so young.

Fareeda observed:

I am focused essentially on building trust in God, that means we have to take care of our community and society. All people and elements of society benefit from our actions directly or indirectly. Serving God implies serving humanity and nature. Furthermore, our intelligence and awareness are vital keys to put in place in our community in the public policy process at all levels.

In public life, faith is displayed as an essential element in all aspects of the daily life of people. They also apply faith in their businesses and other activities. One active woman who long advocated for human rights stated:

Our success in business is not only what we do, but without the help of God, we never have been sustainably successful. We can only direct some parts of our life, and the rest must rely upon the destination that God has given us. There is an Islamic perspective on doing business that requires an ethical part as well.

6.1.3 Faith Empowering People for Positive Change

As people assembled in Al-Mubarak Mosque, FEDMIN Foundation and the Mualaf Club, I asked them "Why do you have to gather together in this place?" Some replied: "I am here because I wanted to help my community to take care of our children. They are learning Al-Quran, and I am so proud to be part of their learning." Others answered: "I don't have enough money to help our mosque, but I have enthusiasm and willingness. So, I devote myself to help our community as much as I can."

Fatimah who just moved to make her home in Al-Mubarak Community, has been devoting herself and family to build this community since its establishment in 1995. She explained why she had to move into this particular community, saying that:

I wished I could change myself, and I wanted to fulfil my religious practices if I could come close to the mosque. I then decided to buy this home in Ban Nong Muean Thao village so that I could bring all my family's members – particularly my grandchildren – to learn more about Islam and be close to an Islamic environment that Al-Mubarak Muslim community provides for. I got this idea from a close Buddhist friend of mine whose advice was that my family should stay close to such a Muslim community. Al-Mubarak Community is, therefore, our best choice. I have to thank my Buddhist friends.

Participants joined many activities organised by Al-Mubarak Community. They often volunteered time assisting people in varied ways. Some were keen to cook food for visitors; some helped keep the mosque and the community road clean. Some were keen to make good friendships with visitors, travellers and newcomers. Some also committed to taking care of the children.

I observed that it was not easy for them to dedicate themselves to work for the sake of the whole community and broader society. Participants had to be extremely patient in to face many daily challenges and difficulties.

Khadijah, the final Director of Udon Thani Centre of Muslim Youth, before it merged into the STW School in 2007, said:

In order to take care of children at the Centre, it is not easy to handle. I have to manage it 24/7. I must be patient on what people might think about me. Sometimes I felt disappointed by some people. I knew that God is seeing me. I felt that He helps me all the time. Some people advise me: "Do not care for some people who look down on you, God is with you forever. Please do your duty; you are the one chosen by Him to do this job."

One father of three children concluded: "We have faith. Whatever we do, we do with faith in Allah Almighty."

So far, people have attempted to develop the community with the same faithful manners as their first-generation embraced. They grew up with the teaching of Islam. Therefore, they have endeavoured to intentionally play a role as contributors and providers of goodwill and social services to people in need, whether in our community or larger society.

One gentleman who was a soldier, working in the Deep South of Thailand, talked about his first experience of Al-Mubarak Community, saying:

When I first visited here, my perception completely changed. I would say that the people of this community are most generous. They gave me, including my family and relatives, a warm welcome to be a part of the community. Yes, I often had lunch and dinner with them. Personally speaking, it is about the power of faith.

In a focus group of Muslim women, participants elaborated on how they worked for the sake of Allah Almighty only. They wanted to present the most suitable image of Islam and Muslim by giving examples to others. One mother of one boy and one girl said: "Faith can also be a powerful force for making a better life and prosperous community. I profoundly believe that if we consistently followed Allah's guidance, we would never be misled on anything."

There was a challenging notion that I needed to get more understanding on. Faith, in many people's views, was about action and good deeds. Some participants shared their attitude towards faith with one another in the community meeting, saying "We have to do a good action or deed for Allah as if we see Him, although we cannot see him, we undoubtedly believe that He is perpetually watching over us."

One younger woman stated:

Our action or deed, therefore, requires faith as an inherent power to change our life and community from within. As a Muslim, I desire His pleasure and paradise in the hereafter. Honestly speaking, I must first think that if we exert faith, I will also believe that Muslims want to change the conditions of our life or community we live in without any force or persuasion by others.

She continued to explain faith and its power of positive change: "My mom ever instructed me that 'If we invest in Allah, we shall forever be the winner of everything.'"

Participants were passionately and thoughtfully interested in issues around faith. Some participants had a faith dimension in life with a deep understanding that all the actions they took must be connected to Almighty Allah only, all the time. They accepted that nobody guaranteed their successes and honours and that they would perform good deeds to create our community with sincerity and honesty. Fareeda was passionate about this faith issue, said:

Now, I have only one intention to please Almighty Allah by being a good Muslim and working for others with my sincerity. I have no time to receive any honours or credits from people but Allah. I thought it (*that realisation*) was the most significant turning point of my life, but for some reason, I felt relieved. I acknowledge that turning point of my life. I might be forever a politician, but now I never thought of being in that role anymore. It depends on Allah's guidance. If my role as a politician is beneficial to our community, I will follow His advice. I would no longer scramble to be a politician personally.

6.1.4 Faith Securing Halal Food Provision

Halal food provision emerged as an important issue in the research. Participants were worried about its scarcity in their daily lives. Khadijah, Danai and Apirat felt strongly that

this unique food should be promoted in the lives of the Muslims and others as safe, clean, and healthy food for all.

There was only the fresh Tambon Non-Sung market in the research area that provided enough Halal slaughtered meat for Muslims who needed to consume Halal meat. Other forms of Halal food with the Halal brand (chicken, beef) were easily found in the supermarkets, particularly Big C, Tesco Lotus, 7-Eleven and Makro. These supermarkets are multinational corporations (MNCs) which have invested in Thailand.

Dawud Paleebat, the one shop owner selling Halal slaughtered meat in the fresh food market in Tambon Non-Sung, shared his opinion on Halal food provision. He said that the amount of Halal food products provided for all Al-Mubarak Community members was completely adequate, and that there was no scarcity for Muslims for consumption in their daily lives. His family continues to supply Halal slaughtered meat daily to people from his generation through to those of his son's age.

Dawud explained that his cattle were brought from Bangladesh, across Myanmar into Thailand through Tak Province's Mae Sot district, a city in western Thailand that shares a border with Myanmar to the west. Thai herdsmen also sent cattle directly to his family from Tak province and Sukhothai province, provinces in the upper central and lower northern region of Thailand.

At the start of his career, he set up his own cattle farm, but that farm had now shifted to be a temporary location for holding cattle bought elsewhere. Dawud said that there was no longer any cattle farm located in this area. Since 1996 his family had run the Halal slaughtered meat shop in the non-Sung fresh market, serving Halal food to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Dawud and his family slaughtered one or two cattle daily and ten cattle weekly. For his business, just four per cent were regular Muslim customers, and – 96% per cent were

non-Muslim customers. His shop regularly provided meat for Muslims from Udon Thani, and neighbouring Nong Khai, and Sakon Nakhon provinces.

Dawud reflected that trust and high quality were essentially his responsibility, and that he must maintain those values. He hoped that his descendants would also follow those values. Soon, it would depend on his children, and only they could decide whether this career remained viable for them or not. It was going to be up to his sons and daughters to make a final decision. He added:

My family would need to make sure that Halal food remains a high quality for all our customers regardless of Buddhists, Muslims, or others. We need to serve them equally as our invaluable clients. If they still support us, we can provide them with our good and healthy products continuously and sustainably.

In addition, the Rabi'ah Halal shop provides local Halal processed meatball products for the wholesale and retail trade nationwide. This shop deals with business supply through the online market and social media, for instance through a Facebook page. The demands on this Isan local Halal food company had rapidly grown, and the owner is using a private logistic company to run the business. At the same time, there was one roti shop in the daily non-Sung fresh market. Khadijah gave her opinion on Halal food provision, saying:” The Halal food and service is growing, and many people want to consume a clean and healthy food. Therefore, we need to take this opportunity to provide this kind of food for them.

6.2 Women's Role

More women than men live in Al-Mubarak Community and have played a vital role in supporting the process of Al-Mubarak Community's development. Fareeda stressed that Muslim women must use their positions to help create harmony and avoid any forms of conflict among our people. She noted “The role of women in Muslim communities around the world remains critical.”

Aminah talked about the vital role played by converted Muslim women or 'Mualaf Muslimah'. They have been tirelessly playing a vital role in supporting the development of their communities. Dr Preeda explained that "'Mualaf' referred to Buddhists, Christians and those of other faiths who convert to be Muslims, when they marry people who are Muslims by birth."

Participants indicated that women could do many things more freely than ever. In some other Muslim communities, men have kept an eye on women all the time. One sister, who had just given birth to an infant, noted that "Discrimination is about people who do not want women to get involved in a progressive society. So, when we have different thoughts and ideas in the broader community, at the same time, we need to manage and recognise it." She added:

So, we demand a state of security in life. Additionally, we need a requirement of religious rights and, in some cases, the right to travel without permission from men. We can have the right to make a concrete decision personally.

In a focus group with Muslim women, many participants raised concerns about the infringements of Muslim women's rights that have continuously occurred in some Muslim countries. One nurse said:

Look! What's wrong with some Muslim communities abroad – Pakistan, we would find that Muslim women may be restrained at home unless they get permission from husbands. On the contrary, Muslim women in Thailand, particularly in the Isan region, have the right to work outside. Men and women both are equal; women are not forced to follow their husbands on every matter, but we respect each other. I sense that.

She also added "We are in Thailand, not in Saudi Arabia. Thai society is more progressive than ever before. Women have the right to vote and express their concerns in the public area. Additionally, our spouses-husbands listen to us more."

Al-Mubarak Community has recognised that Muslim women have the right to express their voices on community development concerns candidly. Khadijah noted: "We are in a better situation than those who live in many majority Muslim areas."

At Al-Mubarak Mosque level, there is no official female committee which plays a role in managing its affairs. But in practice female members have been working actively along with male committees and members in participating in developing the mosque. Khadijah's view was that "Yet, I am okay to be part of this community. I feel free to participate and contribute to the mosque and community I belong to." She said "I appreciate the mosque giving its women members a large space to do things in our community willingly. We can help this mosque as members of it, and that is enough for me.

Hamidah outlined the vital roles and significant contributions that the group of Mualaf Muslimah had played in supporting the process of Al-Mubarak Community's development as: bridging a sense of alienation between Muslims and Buddhists, being determined to take full responsibility for change, and endeavouring to be volunteers for community service.

6.2.1 Women Bridging a Sense of Alienation

Hamidah and other converted Muslim women worked continuously to create a vibrant intimacy with their Buddhist neighbours in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. She observed:

I just intend to help my community as much as I can. I will do what I can to help my friends, whether they are Buddhists or Muslims to live together as intimate friends. I used to be a Buddhist, so I understand local culture and speak local Isan language. I also understand what my Buddhist friends are thinking about our community. My converted Muslim friends and I try our best to connect with our neighbours. We do exercise and work together daily.

Some helped set up the Angel Aerobic Sport Group led by the Buddhist women, like Dawan, in the village. Some Muslim women worked on supporting occupations for women in need. Some dedicated themselves to cleaning the village.

As local people, the group of converted Muslim women in the community could describe what was happening in Al-Mubarak Community in comfortable and accessible ways that neighbours would understand. At the same time, they could give answers and explain to

their friends who might ask about Islam, and what was happening in the Muslim world, via the same language, a local Isan language. The women recognised how social media and news could alienate neighbours, and they tried to create a sense of intimacy and resilience with neighbours.

Khadijah observed that: “So far, it seems that our women members – converted Muslims – are leading the community. I think no one can deny their leading role in bringing us together.”

The Angel Aerobic Sport Group has six Muslim members and 94 Buddhist members who join the group daily. These women are active and participatory. One Buddhist member was “delighted that they have joined our group. We are mutual and intimate friends and have long known one another. Often, we have lunch and do many activities for our village.”

A Muslim woman expressed her insights on this sport group.: “Muslims should be getting involved in all activities in the village and show that Muslims can do their best for others. Muslims should express what they can contribute to others beyond just the Muslim community.”

6.2.2 Women Determined to Take Full Responsibility

Khadijah said: “Our women members are playing a vital role to develop and improve this community. They are doing well with limited resources – time, money, knowledge and so on.”

Participants observed that whenever the Imam called meetings, the community's women would be more engaged and more active than men in proposing the ideas and actions on the community development at the mosque.

One mother noted that having numbers of women involved in all community activities, like seminars, events and meetings was critical. She said:

We have no doubt women are playing a vital role in community development in many aspects of this process. Often, most ideas of community management that come from women are unanimously acceptable and doable. Women become both managers and strategists for all affairs of the community at large.

In community meetings, women could bridge the gaps on critical issues and share their energy and prudence with men in all aspects of community development processes and practice.

One nurse stated that nothing was successful without women's participation and empowerment. There was no doubt that women were the most significant portion of community development and practice. Those women were bound to work together. At the same time, she recognised that her husband had supported her views and activities in what she did along with other women in the community. She said "Fortunately, my husband appreciates what I am doing for the community, I seriously devote myself to my religion. He favoured and supported this."

A woman who ran a small food shop in the city noted that the experience of being a mother was a powerful element for development when women were active and participatory in bringing together their abilities and potential to operate and to act for their community. She said:

A mother is naturally a leader, and I am a mother without an education degree, but I can also look after my children to grow up with a higher degree. I am so proud of any mother who devotes herself to her children. I finally believe that motherhood is the power to make a better world for all.

Muslim women participants endeavoured to solve issues and difficulties that might happen in the community quickly, as they arose. They felt a sense of care and concern about their beloved family, friends, community, and society. Some participants engaged with women's affairs at the provincial level. Some were nominated to receive awards as role models of social development at the Udon Thani provincial and national levels.

Participants viewed women as perpetually active and aware of what was happening in the community. They fretted about the demands and interests of the community members who were asking for help. Aminah said:

Sometimes women felt more sensitive about certain things than men in some ways. We do not know why we are in that circumstance. I am convinced those males would also want to go forwards along with us. As a mother, I am most confident that we can fix the problems we are now facing in our community.

6.2.3 Women Endeavouring to be Proud Volunteers

One Buddhist neighbour observed that Muslim women were likely to dedicate themselves to be volunteers either in their community or the village. They were regularly involved in many activities, and some Buddhists often came to help with the events that the mosque was hosting.

Khadijah expressed the view that Al-Mubarak Community required more people to join the work that the community had available. Some retired women became active members of Al-Mubarak Community because they had time and a firm purpose in volunteering. Hamidah said “It is about a volunteering mind, which is vitally essential to our community development. Volunteerism is the soul of our community’s being.”

Apirat observed:

Women members of Al-Mubarak Community are the true volunteers for making a better community. They can do what men are not keen to do like providing food for guests and visitors or even decorating the mosque, the foundation for their events in this community. They show us their contribution, love, kindness, and devotion to everyone. They are indeed an integral part of their community.

Fatimah acknowledged that it was not just the food provision that women could do; they could also present ideas and manage plans very well for the events and activities held in the community.

Fareeda also observed that there are women members of the community with extensive leadership experience.

Fatimah Mat-Aree had held leading roles including campaigning for justice building, poverty eradication, as well as fighting against multinational corporations (MNCs) like Tesco Lotus, a hypermarket company, which wanted to establish a branch in Kumphawapi district of Udon Thani province. Unfortunately, Fatimah and her alliances lost their long fight against that MNC.

Mariam Ngamkanong was born to a local Isan family in Nong Khai province. She had been a significant advocate for building trust among Muslims and Buddhists in So Phisai District, now a district of Bueng Kan province, the newly declared province in Isan region, which became the 76th province of Thailand on March 23, 2011. She ran her bakery shop, Cake Mariam, in So Phisai District and that shop became a meeting point for local people, particularly state officials who were her customers, as well as for Muslim tourists and visitors who wanted to visit her province and cross the border into Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Aminah Samadeh was one of the founding members of the Isan Muallaf Club. Her mission was to build the Club for other converted Muslims and women who have been Muslim since birth, who need help and assistance in terms of knowledge, opportunities and jobs. Many participants recognised her as a Muslim coordinator who was able to seamlessly connect with local people and local government.

Khadijah Abbas was the last Executive Director of the Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth before it merged into the STW School. She endeavoured to continue managing the Centre with its last batch of 10 students. The FEDMIN Foundation had to solve this challenge as the number of students at the Centre was not enough to keep it moving.

After Kru Haroon passed away, FEDMIN Foundation promptly appointed Khadijah to take over the Centre. Before taking a high position, she had been serving as the chef at the Centre and FEDMIN Foundation. She served in that position for two years, and soon the Centre building was renovated to be the STW School, under the supervision of the FEDMIN Foundation, and started with the kindergarten class in 2007.

These examples testify to the way in which these four women members tirelessly sacrificed themselves for the betterment of the Isan region beyond the Muslim community. As Apirat said: "I acknowledge our women's group has played an essential and vital role in sustaining our growing community. The converted Muslim women have become our significant backbone in enhancing our community."

6.3 Community Leadership Styles

There were four significant ways in which Al-Mubarak Community Leadership was expressed.

6.3.1 No 'One-Man Show' but Collective Action

Participants thought collective action or collective leadership meant each of them had the potential to contribute to the community's development. One mother explained that leadership had inspired her to do more about her community's participation and engagement.

Fareeda stated that collective leadership meant people were inspired to work together and engage with decision-making processes. Leaders acted with the collective agreement of those with whom they worked.

Participants recognised their ability and capacity to make good choices for their lives and community, which Fatimah felt meant that she had a sense of leadership in herself. She said:

We know, by training, all the task steps to accomplish. Together, we do things as a team of collective action. In the meanwhile, we can fulfil our mission. The meaning of leadership from my point of view is based on our real actions implemented in the community.

Jamilah stated that many people might not understand what roles they played in serving their community. They had the right to give some advice to their leaders while monitoring the actions of those leaders who had been working for the community. People's engagement was important. People could take the lead on some issues and be followers in other community activities. She said:

All community members must fully engage with the affairs in the community. That's our role as well. The purposeful roles of leaders and followers are, therefore, a decisive key for community development and the functions of organisations we have.

Khadijah said:

People never leave everything to our leader (*Imam*), as he cannot do everything. Regrettably, I never heard that our leader raised some pressing issues like the environmental issue, wellbeing, occupations, and even employment. I think that he is working on these issues quietly, but I do not know. It might be not fair for him too if we only point at him. He can deliver what he can do well. So, this community requires more people to join the work that our community must do.

Fareeda explained that if people let it be only a one-man show for everything in the community, that leads to an unhealthy situation in practice. The man involved may not be able to offer the best choice for the whole community, favouring instead those close friends around him. For instance, one man decided that the mosque would not be the host to manage the Qurbani for the whole community, the ritual animal sacrifice during Eid al-Adha day. Community members asked that the Qurbani be for the needy, the poor, and migrants who are all stakeholders in our community. But those people could hardly do it by themselves; they expected the mosque would provide Qurbani for them as before. As Fareeda remarked in her observation on collective leadership "When we come together, we must change our thoughts and attitude towards our new community. We must do it. We must participate in all activities of the mosque and the community. We are part of it."

Participants like Fareeda, Sultan and Muslimah recognised that, as individuals, people could do much to ensure many things happen in their community. Fareeda stated that the collective leaders are crucial for the community, and individual leaders remained especially relevant to the process of Al-Mubarak Community's development. In her opinion "Islam promotes leadership individually and collectively. So, we need both levels too. Our community cannot stand firmly by the one-person show. If we do as a community, we will go further, In Sha Allah – if God wills".

6.3.2 Laying a Solid Foundation of Mutual Relationships

Most people in Al-Mubarak Community and the village, both Muslims and Buddhists, felt pleased to remember a story of a person, a man who built up this community, a man who bridged the gap between the two faiths. His name was Hajji Haroon Samadeh or 'Kru Haroon'.

As the first leader of Al-Mubarak Community, he had tried his best to promote and support a mutual understanding and functional relationship between the Muslim community and their Ban Nong Muean Thao village neighbours. He had worked and lived with his Buddhist neighbours ever since he first moved with his family from Udon Thani downtown to the village, where he reorganised the Udon Thani Centre of Muslim Youth in 1995. Muslims and Buddhists long recognised his role in promoting and supporting peaceful coexistence between both sides in the village as an influential Muslim leader. One Buddhist villager commented on his active role:

He was an outstanding Muslim leader whom we always admired for his role in helping his community develop; he has also been in good relations with our villagers, mostly Buddhists. We truly miss him.

Aminah, his wife, talked about his story. Kru Haroon passed away on July 11, 2005, and his body was buried in Bangkok. Still, his role in advocating mutual understanding and relationships between Muslims and others remained alive in her heart. Aminah noted that "The villagers still remember his character as well."

Khadijah, Kru Haroon's assistant at the Youth Centre, commented that when he went out into public places like markets and villages, he always greeted the people along the street amicably and enthusiastically. The Buddhist people called him 'Father as teacher', or 'Por-Kru' in the local Isan language, which meant Buddhists highly respected him as their father.

Hamidah said that Kru Haroon's personality had helped to build a mutual trust among Muslims and between Muslims and Buddhists. Kru Haroon was very friendly and modest. He also tried very hard to build a pleasant atmosphere between Muslims and Buddhists through his smiling, talking, and action. His friendly encouragement helped us to live in peace together with neighbours and to deal with family issues and public problems. He instructed Muslims to act as givers to others.

One of Kru Haroon's closest aides stated that his legacy for the public interest was that he had devoted himself to remaining connected to people of different faiths in harmony and solidarity. He did much to help people in the village move away from perceptions of misunderstanding and mistrust about Islam and Muslims that had occurred during his life. Fareeda noted that he served as both a 'mediator' and 'arbitrator' in dealing with people who were involved in problems and conflicts, such as a quarrel among Buddhists.

Hamidah said that Kru Haroon always invited Buddhist local officials and state authority leaders to join his Muslim community's affairs, for example, the FEDMIN Foundation's annual ceremony, Muslim wedding ceremonies and Al-Mubarak Mosque's grand opening ceremony. As a vice-president of the FEDMIN Foundation, he encouraged all the FEDMIN Foundation committees to donate interest from their committees' bank accounts to help support village activities like repairing the village hall and road. He never missed village meetings with the Buddhist villagers. One former subdistrict headman, who was working closely with Kru Haroon, said "He was a good Muslim and good Thai. I had to work with him to build our village. He was very supportive of our work in the village".

Fatimah observed that Kru Haroon's daily life was simple. Everyone could mirror his actions and practice easily. He was well-known as 'a pragmatist' rather than 'a theorist' in his work with people in the village. He applied his wisdom to resolve the problems and conflicts among people in the village. She said "If we observe well, we will constantly hear that people often referred to Kru Haroon's name around and in the community. People of my age are still remembering him".

Hanafi and Abdullah observed that many Muslims tried their best to follow in the footsteps of Kru Haroon, who had often contributed food and materials for his neighbours in need. Some of them still remembered what he had done for them. Fatimah said

Al-Mubarak Community has continuously gained a privileged result from his merit and action. His name has always been spoken among our neighbours in Ban Nong Muean Thao village.

Apirat commented that Kru Haroon had a long-term commitment to building a Muslim community at Ban Nong Thao Village, a peaceful place where Muslims could share good deeds and practices with others in Isan's pluralistic society. He is known as 'the father of the Muslim community', a man who sacrificed himself to promote an Islamic attribute of peaceful coexistence with other people in his village. He seemed to be the sort of representative of Islam that Muslims could seek out across generations. Apirat recognised that "I have no doubt because people still remember him all the time. He left such actions of compassion and care for all of us. Hence, we miss him always."

Fareeda, Sultan, Abdullah and Aminah noted that Kru Haroon never insulted others. People felt comfortable with his way of instruction on Islam and other issues relevant to their lives. He tried to listen and understood everyone, particularly including converted Muslims. Fareeda added: "He always gave us motivation and hope. He was such a compassionate, visionary spiritual leader whom people most admired."

6.3.3 Initiating Quality Education for the Children of All Faiths

Apirat and Fatima acknowledged the work of Dr Preeda Papertchob who has been devoting himself to improving and developing Muslims' quality of life in the Isan region for 40 years. He founded the FEDMIN Foundation and instigated the STW School for children of all faiths in the community and Isan region.

Dr Preeda had advised that, "We have to build this school where we want to make sure that quality education can be generated, and all people benefit. We must build excellent and good students who can take care of our society."

Patinya said Dr Preeda worked to lay a foundation for future strong relationships between Muslim and other faith communities by welcoming Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian children to play and learn together. Mustafa said, "Dr Preeda is the founder of the STW School which has so far played a significant role in building the seeds of hope and future for Thai society."

In a community meeting, participants agreed Dr Preeda had become a significant Muslim scholar who had initiated the FEDMIN Foundation and founded the STW School. He had shown that the Al-Mubarak Community could become a role model for other Muslim communities in the Isan region. Dr Preeda travelled across Isan participating and engaging in the development of other Muslim communities in his role as President of the FEDMIN Foundation. Hamidah said:

As treasurer of the FEDMIN Foundation, I have been working closely with him and learned why he wishes to move and thinks a lot about our Muslim community. He always intends to improve and develop our quality of life with his new ideas as an agricultural economist. Sometimes, I understand that his vision is beyond our understanding.

Dr Preeda said:

Muslims around the world understand that the religion of Islam determinedly promotes education. All agreed that education is not limited only to Islamic education but includes other general education areas, such as science, technology, arts, languages, law, politics, social sciences, economics, business, and management. On the other hand, there are not any schools

established in the Isan region which belong to the Muslim community or Muslim organisations. However, it is true that the Christian schools are pervasive everywhere and are well-established, managed, and set upon a high standard, recognised by Muslims. Generally, people in Thai society are open-minded and accepting of other religions. For instance, a minority project such as Christian schools has been well-accepted by the public for a long time.

During my fieldwork period, misunderstandings about Muslims related to terrorism made public opinion very negative towards the religion of Islam and Muslim communities. Since the local Muslim community was aware of the situation, it was well prepared. Before the establishment of the STW School, they organised “the Kid’s Science Camp” in such a way that Muslim and other children could live and learn together. The founder of the school, Dr Preeda said “We must explain again and again that our school is for children of all faiths and how good our school is in the age of globalisation and plurality.”

The results of the camp were very positive for all parents and children who attended the program. The parents were highly impressed with the modern methods of teaching in the school, gained trust in the school administration, and approved of the management of its staff. It was found that the local people warmly welcomed this type of school.

Patinya talked about Dr Preeda’s vision:

It was the first time that Muslim and Buddhist children have lived together in the same place. Also, Buddhist children wanted to wear hijabs from their Muslim friends during the camp. Since then, the school has taken this genuine idea of promoting a concept of pluralism through this wise strategy that is “Play Together, Learn Together. The school’s management team rise to many challenges by working harder which brought success to a peace-promoting school like the STW School. It proved that a Muslim school could establish itself in the Buddhist majority area if Muslims dare to dream and take it seriously. Therefore, it is possible for Muslims to set up other schools like the STW School in different places across the region.”

After the completion of the mosque in 2005, Kru Haroon became the ever first Imam of the mosque. After he passed away in late 2005, the registered members of Al-Mubarak Mosque unanimously selected Dr Preeda to be the second Imam of the Mosque, the first officially selected Imam authorised by the Ministry of Interior. Now Imam Shafei has been

selected by the registered members of Al-Mubarak Mosque and leads its administration and religious affairs.

6.3.4 Supporting an Islamic Atmosphere

Imam Shafei is committed to instructing members of the community about Islamic principles, the Noble Qur'an, Al-Hadith, Islamic history, ethics, and the neighbourhood in Islam. Love, compassion, mercy and how to be a good Muslim are subjects in his classes and during daily prayers. He took the lead in educating people about Islamic teachings.

Imam Shafei and his family stay in the mosque area and work to create an Islamic atmosphere by teaching Muslims who attended the mosque daily. He instructs them in the meaning of the Noble Qur'an and the teaching of the biography of Prophet Muhammad through Islamic texts in Arabic after the Isa prayer (at night) and the Fajr prayer (in the early morning). His initiative provides the essential substance of Islam for the community members to practise in their daily lives.

In a focus group of community members, one of the first Muslim generation commented that ever since the early days of the establishment of Al-Mubarak Community, the late Hajji Haroon Samadeh had played a vital role in instruction on Islam for his members at the Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth and at his home, daily and weekly. Since then, there had sometimes been a small vacuum in Islamic teaching until Imam Shafei joined the community. He continued:

We trust him to take care of the mosque and our children. Some members, who live a bit far from this community, have brought their children to learn Islam with our Imam at the mosque at the weekends. Yes, we need such an Islamic environment for our kids and us. We are pleased to help the Imam to develop our community mosque to be good for all. It is appropriate for us to give him our trustworthiness.

One mosque committee member said that Imam Shafei was a devout person who was determined to serve the Al-Mubarak Community. Initially, he had been in Phatthalung Province in the southern region of Thailand. He moved his family to this community to earn a small salary (9,000 Baht per month = 450 NZD) as the Imam of Al-Mubarak

Mosque. He hoped to develop and improve Al-Mubarak Mosque into a prosperous and sustainable Islamic learning area.

Imam Shafei told of his journey before making his decision to move to Udon Thai Province, saying that when he studied at the Islamic University of Madinah, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he had a definite plan to return to teach and preach Islam in Thailand. He had the good fortune to meet Dr Preeda Papertchob, the current president of the FEDMIN Foundation, who convinced him to join Al-Mubarak Community and work for community development in the Isan region. Imam Shafei shared his words as the newly elected Imam of Al-Mubarak Mosque, saying:

It is not an easy task when you become an Imam. Being an Imam looks like a father who must be taking care of his family. I have a lot of work to do. I have to take care of all the members of this mosque. Sometimes, I felt nervous, and it is not easy to deal with many challenges that always occur in our community.

Imam Shafei's initial intention was to generate charitable funds for the mosque. He started campaigning about the potential of charitable giving for making Al-Mubarak Mosque prosperous and sustainable. He said "Charity is an essential instrument to sustain activities. If our members continue to support our mosque with charity, our mosque will grow."

The Imam often told his students who learn and recite the Noble Qur'an with him that:

All members are equal. I am just an ordinary man who can hardly take full responsibility in the entire community. I cannot change anything by myself. Instead, all members must be the agents of change. I do not want to pray alone at the mosque nor understand the Noble Qur'an. If this community is not developing, it is because of our actions and participation. Don't blame anyone for our faults. As the Imam, I will try my best to understand the issues this community is facing.

One woman from the first Muslim generation noted that people are fortunate that the Imam is always at the mosque. She noted that he is a very good host for guests and visitors as he prefers to work in the mosque area rather than visiting many places outside the mosque. She said:

In my view, he is good at religious practices; we have given our trust in him as our Imam. However, he participates less in our activities outside the mosque. We need him to do more than just the affairs of the mosque, whether it is the waste problem or other issues we are concerned about, like family problems, etc.

Ismail, the Khateeb of Al-Mubarak Mosque, observed that Imam Shafei liked to reassign his missions on all the external affairs of the mosque, asking others to attend official ceremonies and liaise between the mosque and state authorities or the private sector in Udon Thani province, and at national level. Imam Shafei said “I will do what I can and will leave some work to others who are keen to do it more than me.”

Khadijah observed that “People require his leadership to be more than just being an Imam of the mosque. Yes, he only pays attention to the affairs of Al-Mubarak Mosque. That is not bad. It is okay. Sometimes, we understand that the work of the mosque means the work of the whole Al-Mubarak community too.” She also commented all Al-Mubarak Community members are lucky, “we have our leaders - Kru Haroon, Dr Preeda and now Imam Shafei. They are from different backgrounds of education, expertise, and experiences but we recognise them and respect them”.

6.4 Muslim Faith-Based-Organisations

All participants recognised that all Muslim Faith-Based Organisations (MFBOs) – The Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth (merged with the FEDMIN Foundation), Al-Mubarak Mosque, the SWT School, the FEDMIN Foundation, and the Isan Mualaf Club had long played constructive and vital roles in developing and improving Al-Mubarak Community since its establishment in 1995.

Aminah, Preeda, Apirat, and other participants saluted Al-Mubarak Community for having given birth to four organisations outside the mosque which work in different ways to develop and enhance the quality of life of all community members. Each organisation has its own networks and supports, while simultaneously working for community development and progress. Khadijah, Hamidah and Danai all said that Al-Mubarak

Community was able to move forward effectively because of the contribution these organisations make through their activities and programmes, which sustain the community effectively and interdependently.

Participants, therefore, classified the uniquely constructive contributions of the MFBOs towards Al-Mubarak Community's development as follows: being the primary mechanism to push the development process of the Muslim community in the Isan region; being a neutral space for promoting the policy of multiculturalism; being social entrepreneurs for people in need; and being catalysts for social welfare and wellbeing.

6.4.1 Being the Primary Mechanism to Push the Development Process of The Muslim Community in the Isan Region

Preeda and Danai shared their opinion that the central purposes of the FEDMIN Foundation are to sustain Islamic education in the region, to collaborate with government agencies and the private sector in developing an Islamic education system, to support and encourage people to pay more attention to Islam, to set up Muslim Youth Centres in big cities, to help build new mosques, to cooperate with other non-profit organisations and to work together for the public interest in the region. They avoid political affairs altogether. As a result, the Thai Office of National Culture approved the establishment of the Foundation on November 11, 1998.

Apirat, Fareeda and Khadijah said that the FEDMIN Foundation had critically dynamic organizational and individual relationships with various Muslim communities through its role as a coordinator between Muslims in the region and Muslims in other parts of the country. The FEDMIN Foundation afforded a platform on which many Muslim communities could talk directly to one another about their activities and the problems they were facing. It helps isolated Isan Muslim communities share collective expertise as they are separated from the mainstream Muslim communities in the south of Thailand.

Ismail, Mustafa, and Fatimah noted that the FEDMIN Foundation remains active in various activities, such as humanitarian aid and social welfare. Ismail said, “As a vital local organisation, FEDMIN Foundation, therefore, has to critically re-organise itself to continue its prosperous contributions of social devotion to the region in the future”.

Khadijah, Apirat and some participants who had been involved in the work of the FEDMIN Foundation commented that, in the beginning, it had been the primary focus of the first generation of Muslims in Al-Mubarak Community and other areas. Much had changed; the new members of the community have other organisations to pay attention to. At times, the FEDMIN Foundation seems to be neglected by the newcomers, who are closer to the mosque rather than FEDMIN Foundation. In their view, some people perceived the FEDMIN Foundation as just a place for greeting guests, even though it was the first Muslim organisation not only in this community but in the entire Isan region. It had already served community wellbeing and provided Muslim communities with vast opportunities for 24 years.

6.4.2 Being a Neutral Space for Promoting the Policy of Multiculturalism

Jamilah and Danai observed that the STW School, which was under the FEDMIN Foundation's patronage, had a significant role as a neutral space in supporting religious and secular curricula for its staff and students of different faiths – Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. Only about 10% of the 200 students are Muslim, with the rest about 85% Buddhist and 5% Christian. These proportions are very similar for teaching staff, over 80% are Thai Buddhists, 10% Muslim teachers including 1 Indonesian Muslim and 2 Christian Philippino teachers. The school policy is to sustain an atmosphere where students of all faiths have the freedom to play and learn together. The STW School endeavours to stand firm on the concepts of pluralism and multiculturalism in action.

Patinya said the school aspired to be a role model in the Isan region and Thailand, while encouraging its students to become intelligent, smart and responsive citizens of the world. Participants like Patinya, Fareeda, Ismail and Jamilah noted that the STW School

had become a neutral space for all. The school provided non-Muslims with a comfortable area to engage with Muslims in the school area, often for the first time. Some Buddhist parents said that they felt more secure there than going to the mosque, which was described as a religious place. They sensed that the mosque was essentially for Muslims only, not for all people.

Apirat and Preeda felt that the current ongoing conflict situations in Thailand and abroad had a profound impact on the general public's attitudes towards Islam and Muslims in general. Some of these attitudes resulted from what they considered misinformation spread by both domestic and international media. Accordingly, they raised the example about how to create a better understanding of how to live together through the type of pluralistic education offered by STW School.

Local people worked as teachers, cooks, drivers, janitors and gardeners at the school. It offered an extraordinary opportunity to create a harmonious bond between Muslims and non-Muslims in this area. The school also avoided hegemony and malicious attitudes, which caused Apirat to observe that “It is essential that starting points can be built in the schools and not just at our STW School here in Udon Thani.”

Preeda and Ismail suggested that this STW School project of Al-Mubarak Community had generated a solid understanding between people of different faiths – particularly children – and tried hard to be the neutral space for Muslims and non-Muslims who lived side by side in a pluralistic society like the Isan region.

Explaining the school model for promoting the multiculturalist policy, Patinya and Jamilah said that the STW School stipulated three relevant principles of school management through school administration; mutual acceptance, multicultural educational curricula, and the Wasatiyyah concept (the way of moderation in Islam). The school promoted students, regardless of their religion.

A Christian and an Indonesian teacher said that the SWT School tried hard to serve as a model school for kindergarten and for primary and higher levels in future. The school had to make sure this initiative would provide an excellent education to nourish the children and encourage them to be well-disciplined. The school intended all students to be the pride of their family and a high-quality source of human resources for the country.

6.4.3 Being Social Entrepreneurs for People in Need

As the newest organisation in Al-Mubarak Community, Nurisan, Fareeda and Danai commented that the Isan Mualaf Club had to prove that it provided a useful opportunity for people, mainly converted Muslims who were its primary target. The Mualaf Club plays a significant role in promoting the understanding of Islam to mostly new Muslims who live in and near the community.

Aminah and Fatimah noted that one of major objectives of the Mualaf Club was to eradicate poverty among all members. The Mualaf Club recently launched its Centre for Social Development where people could come to train to be social entrepreneurs, for example in running small shops to sell roti, fried chicken and Thai sweets.

The Mualaf Club provided opportunities aimed at improving the quality of life among the poor people. Fatimah, Aminah and Fareeda said that overcoming poverty among Muslims was certainly their top priority. All organisations, including the Mualaf Club, operated according to the notions of their own donors provided the budget to deal with the poverty that people suffered. The Mualaf Club also recently initiated a Savings Fund for poverty eradication.

Danai and Khadijah noted that the Mualaf Club was inspired to develop creative projects to promote supplementary occupations among all Al-Mubarak Muslim community members and the broader community of Muslims in Udon Thani province. It was mainly women who were committed to making this project possible. Khadijah was clear:

Action and implementation are urgent. In the past, we have talked about the One Tambon One Product project (OTOP products) of Al-Mubarak Community. It is just about an idea. What we should do now is we must manage our mechanisms and organisations to get ready for this matter.

6.4.4 Being the Catalyst for Social Welfare and Wellbeing

Participants recognised that Al-Mubarak Mosque played a prominent role in supporting social welfare and services among all its members and among the wider public, including travellers and visitors. Likewise, Hanafi and Fatimah observed that Muslim children had the opportunity to meet, play, pray, and eat together at the mosque. The parents also had a chance to meet with one another. The mosque attempted to provide a safe place for the next generation who might take responsibility for their community in the near future.

Some participants like Apirat and Hamidah shared their perspectives on the mosque, saying that since the opening in 2005, Al-Mubarak Mosque had played a decisive role as the symbol of the community. People from all parts of the region and the country often visited the mosque to perform prayers and to give donations and other support for the work of the mosque. They acknowledged the role of the mosque as the primary and most visible expression of the local Muslim community.

In a focus group of Muslims and Buddhists, many participants agreed that Al-Mubarak Mosque provided a social space for all community members to participate and communicate. They used the mosque to interact among themselves, whether personal or public affairs – weddings, meetings, food provision and so on. The mosque's facilities were fully able to serve its members and visitors. Some people supported and donated to the mosque's work rather than assisting other organisations. Apirat said, reflectively, people believed that they would get the best rewards from Almighty God when they donated money and contributed their efforts directly to the mosque, they rather than to other faith-based organisations like schools.

Preeda and Danai shared their view that Al-Mubarak Mosque and other mosques also played a critical role in expanding the education system given the lack of Islamic schools – public or private – in the Isan region. As a result, this mosque's had additional functions over spiritual worship and gaining merit inside the mosque building. It simultaneously acted as a catalyst for enhancing social welfare and service in Al-Mubarak Community.

Recently, the mosque has completed a new building for welcoming visitors and travellers who want to stay in the community. It provides for people who might not feel comfortable staying overnight at the mosque. In the meantime, Imam Shafei and Ismail noted that Al-Mubarak Mosque welcomed all brothers and sisters who wanted to visit this community. Recently, the mosque hosted many groups from other areas. The mosque was open for all, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without any payment. Imam Shafei said:

On the other hand, if they want to pay, we always encourage them to donate to the mosque directly. It is about their satisfaction without requirement. We are also promoting this new social service for all on our Facebook page.

Imam Shafei shared his hope that the mosque's committee would agree to build a community hospital within the mosque area in the future. This idea was conceived as part of the mosque's role in promoting and enhancing social wellbeing in the community. He added "If you study Islamic history, you will find that the Prophet built a mosque as a school, as a shelter, as a hospital; we will do it if we can".

Apirat and Khadijah considered Al-Mubarak Mosque to be, undoubtedly, the fundamental institution that could afford and provide social welfare for everyone regardless of race, nation and ethnicity. The mosque offered social welfare – food, basic education and other services - for the Muslim brothers and sisters who cross the borders. Many of them came from Myanmar – Rohingya, between 50-70 persons – and there were now about 40 Indonesian Muslims living throughout Udon Thani. Most were women who were daughters-in-law in local families. They all knew one another. There were about 8-10 Indonesians who received social services provided by the Al-Mubarak

Mosque regularly. Imam Shafei said “We need to make sure that they feel safe when they are with us. Al-Mubarak Mosque is built to be the heart of human services and the house for worshipping Almighty God”.

6.5 Summary

The findings in this chapter demonstrate faith as the positive force in shifting Al-Mubarak Community’s factions, people and organisations to make this community a better place for all generations. “How faith matters” became a provocative question for all participants to think about as they explored their roles and what they have been doing for their community through MFBOs as mechanisms for change and development.

At the individual level, all participants considered that every person matters to their community’s future, not just those who are leaders. Faith provides people with a framework of human relationships and can be applied to community development in creating a constructive path for the future. Most participants recognised that “faith is a crucial part of our life” and lies at the heart of the community as well.

Besides the role of leaders, most participants insisted the community - look beyond the one-man show, and that collective action is required on the ground. Everyone has the ability and capacity to make good choices for their life in the community. However, some may not know what roles they can play in serving community and society.

In the Al-Mubarak Community, every member matters and all people are responsible for their community. Leaders must take collective leadership and all members have the potential to work for a sustainable community. The gap between the leaders and the members needed to be bridged.

The MFBOs have become mechanisms to drive the process of Al-Mubarak Community’s settlement and development. They have provided all members with great opportunities to learn how to run the community together. The MFBOs have also opened a larger space for Muslim women to participate and be involved in all Al-Mubarak Community

affairs. They have played a vital role in bringing people close to other people from outside. Al-Mubarak Community has been the only Muslim community in Isan that established organisations to take care of Isan's entire Muslim community.

Without the participatory engagement of Muslim women, Al-Mubarak Community would not have reached such a good position as a social provider for people in need and as a catalyst for social change. In all its organisations – the mosque, the school, the foundation and the Mualaf Club - women are at the heart of the process of development and achievement. Therefore, this involvement and equality of Muslim women in all activities must always be maintained if the community is going to be sustained and developed for the next generation.

CHAPTER 7: AL-MUBARAK COMMUNITY'S DEVELOPMENT

This chapter outlines the distinctive characteristics of the Al-Mubarak Community's development and the most critical challenges it faces. This chapter is written in a blended narrative style incorporating the following 4 themes: Al-Mubarak Community's development, community intergenerational transition, community participation and engagement including community capacity. People are still reluctant to participate in community development processes and practice, which can erode the long journey for the Al-Mubarak Community in the Isan context of sustainable development.

Khadijah shared her perspective on Al-Mubarak Community's development, saying "Community development is like a marathon, so we should balance our life and work for our community. Equilibrium is essential to that community development process."

Fatimah said:

Community development is like a bitter medicine, but we have to take it seriously if we need to recover from disease or illness. We have painful experiences enough to cope with ongoing challenges in the path of development at the same time.

Participants recognised that Muslims and their Buddhist neighbours must live together and spontaneously learn from each other. Some commented that any faith community is supposed to be an exemplar of how to play a crucial role in promoting a process of learning how to live together. Al-Mubarak Community was no exception. One mother of three children said, "We want to build Al-Mubarak Community to be a place where we can talk a lot about the matters we can share in the community with our friends."

Most participants acknowledged that the people of Al-Mubarak Community had to take full responsibility and build it up as a 'creative Muslim community', involving a constructive collaboration with people of other faiths. Hamidah noted "We could not build this community alone; we therefore need others to help build and develop our community."

Al-Mubarak Community's development has raised some challenges for the community. Participants had their own understandings and perceptions of the issues facing them. Danai, Vice-President of the FEDMIN Foundation, explained that "Al-Mubarak Community's development has broader definitions, and it is essential to our daily life.

Fatimah said that Al-Mubarak Community's development was uniquely relevant to the lives of people in the area where the research was undertaken. One retired soldier remembered some advice from the late King Rama Bhumibol Adulyadej the Ninth:

He always said to Thai society and particularly the entire government agencies to adapt his thoughtful advice on sustainable development policy [which] was to 'understand', (*khaojai*) 'reach out' (*khaotheung*) and 'develop' (*phatthanā*). Both Muslims and non-Muslims are, therefore, Thais and human beings. They have to be kind to others as well.

The mother of a baby in a focus group for Muslim women noted that "The path of community development and practice is remarkably tough." Khadijah agreed that "It means that we need to understand the people in our community. Understanding of others is a core belief when talking about Al-Mubarak Community's development."

7.1 The Distinctive Characteristics

Participants identified nine uniquely distinctive characteristics of Al-Mubarak Community's development, and these accounts are presented in the thematic sections which follow.

7.1.1 Recognising People as the Heart of Al-Mubarak Community's Development

Some participants recognised that future directions for community development in Al-Mubarak Community depended on all members. Everyone had the potential to do good for this community. They felt the movement of this community in a positive direction relied on the principles of Islam that all members believed in and trusted. As one new settler explained "Compassion, righteous intention, and forgiveness are the essential cores of

maintaining this community as lasting and sustainable. Eventually, God knows best of what is going to happen to this community in the future.”

Khadijah remarked that all Al-Mubarak Community members were essential to community development, which required thinking about a long-term process of growing leaders in this community. She said:

This process of making our leaders is not an easy task, and our children must take time to be our leaders in the future. So far, we face one of the big problems – many members are getting old; most of us are women. We feel tired of pursuing our tasks to move forward.

When participants thought about community development, the word 'people' was frequently used. Fatimah explained to me how she felt about the significance of the word 'people': "My concerned question is, what are we doing as individuals, as a group of people? Do we forget our tasks and duties from the very beginning?" She also emphasised that people had the right to make their own decisions and have their own reasons; they might think differently.

Some participants agreed that Al-Mubarak Community members were just human beings. They were emotional, they might disagree on many things, but there was a starting point that has interdependently brought them along to talk to each other. Those members had to seek a shared future in a clear vision of community development.

Jamilah remarked:

Psychologically, the backgrounds of each individual are fundamental. We must understand about emotions, feelings, expressions, pressures, thoughts of people who might suffer from sickness or trauma of the past. Some might need to take medical prescriptions, and some might require spiritual methods and teachings. Therefore, we have to diagnose the minds and emotions of all our people involved in this serious process of community development. We can agree upon the same purposes and avoid the different points of view we disagree with. Unity in diversity of thought is inevitably a crucial key to achieve our community development as such. Such a mental health consultation is needed in a way in which community development has to go about. Essentially, we all need to ask ourselves together: "Who are we in the process of community development?"

Many participants emphasised that Al-Mubarak Community needed people of different skills and capabilities. Diversity of membership was one of the essential characteristics of Al-Mubarak Community's development. For that reason, the community and its organisations have been facing some significant tests on the issue of enabling their capability to help Muslims and others, both in this area and in the entire Isan region. Jamilah reaffirmed:

All of us can have the ability to do what we can do for the community. Each individual has potential even though we are different in skills and backgrounds. With the potential of our members which can support all organisations very well, I think that is 'community development' in my perception.

Participants also reiterated that they needed such productive participation; it was essential to community capacity building. The 'People of Al-Mubarak' could do many things as individuals. Fareeda said that all Al-Mubarak Community members need to understand which constructive role they can play as individuals. She believed that everybody has their own different potential, talent, skills and leadership. Therefore, the repositioning of their contribution and participation in all affairs of the community was necessary.

Some participants remarked that people from outside Al-Mubarak Community might look at this community as one where there were many potential and capable human resources. On the other hand, the 'People of Al-Mubarak' did not know about their potential and capabilities at the individual level. Most participants recognised that there were particular individuals whose constructive roles were crucial because they demonstrated good manners and practices. For instance, Haji Haroon Samadeh or "Kru Haroon", the most respected forefather, was an excellent model for them. Fatimah noted that "I do recognise all our active members who never lose hope for sustaining our community in their capability and potential.

Participants felt very proud of all the work they had done. They firmly believed that when they did good themselves, the community would ultimately benefit from this work. On the other hand, when they did harm, their community would be significantly impacted by that, too. Danai said:

We have to think that our activities are for our community. And the activities we do in the community are profitable for us. I am so much prouder to work for the community than for myself. It is more valuable than what we do for ourselves. Partly because what we do for the community will serve all of us in the community.

Nonetheless, Jamilah said:

We must accept that our ideas or opinions for community development may sometimes be rejected by other members who may have some wiser ideas than us. Also, we never feel that we are insignificant to the community. We have to accept and respect that situation which might occur daily. Yes, the rhythm of relationship in the community looks like the rhythm of life – everything, ups and downs, naturally.

Apirat believed that all the community's existing organisations had vast networks and could take care of the community through their capability and potentiality. Participants believed that self-development was essential, and that their experiences should support their children and grandchildren to grow in terms of general education and religious understanding. Some also reasoned that each generation had its own ideas and approaches to developing Al-Mubarak Community. The first generation required fresh new opinions from second and third generations who would need time and opportunities to show their ability and expertise to move this particular community forward.

Khadijah said that each generation had tried hard to do the best for her beloved community. She observed:

One person could not do it alone. Our first generation is fading away. Our society is now changing rapidly. Therefore, we need to re-manage and re-imagine our community. I never lose hope to think that our community has a bright future. I could imagine that future.

7.1.2 Encouraging Shared Consultation with Trust

In a community focus group meeting, all participants perceived that ‘shared consultation’ is a useful tool for creative community development and is related to the spiritual aspect of communal mechanisms for solidifying Al-Mubarak Community’s development.

Sarfar shared his experience of working with non-Muslims

I work for Ford Dealer Udon Thani Ford Teekacharoen as its manager. Recently, I have called on three staff to talk about their destructive behaviours which affected our organisation. After a serious discussion, those three staff immediately quit. Those guys could not accept my shared consultation and felt that they lost face. It was utterly unacceptable. They did not want to be advised by anybody, even their boss. It is about their ego, indeed. The greatest value of shared collaboration is a decisive key to making our new creative community development achievable.

People from the first-generation of settlers had tried to campaign for a Muslim cemetery in Al-Mubarak Community. Some were still reluctant to support this idea because they cared for the feelings of their Buddhist neighbours. They accepted that having a Muslim cemetery was a good idea, but Muslims had to make sure that their neighbours would not feel uncomfortable about this long-term project. Apirat reflected that “In the future, both Muslim and Buddhist communities need to seriously address this issue and seek to find an amicable solution.”

This issue is a critical one in many Muslim communities which need to live with other faith communities in the globalised world. Some Muslim communities had their cemeteries for a long time before the physical development of urbanisation came along. In Muslim culture, a community needs a mosque, Halal food and a cemetery.

Some participants considered that there was a sense of mistrust and misunderstanding between some of the Muslim community members, but they continued to work for their community as a whole. Mistrust might occur because of individual matters, but it could erode and affect the collective confidence among all Al-Mubarak Community members. Apirat said that all Al-Mubarak Community members should be working together, whether on big or small tasks. Trust-building among community members was a

significant key to success in the process of community development. He noted that "sincerity is the heart of all community matters."

In community activities, sincere minds were expected from all members. Apirat said:

Sometimes, we respond as though we are opposed to each other. It seems like we desire to beat other members in the same community. Why do we do it, do we have a sincere mind in our heart, or don't we? I always ask myself. I am not sure whether I did something wrong, or I did nothing. I am convinced that all members who work for all our organisations in the community require mutual respect and understanding among themselves. We want that trust-building even more than when we first settled down here.

Khadijah commented that a process of community development required respect for others and acting with sincerity. She noted:

All people are equal in community development. You cannot say 'I am better than you, and vice versa.' Our members, therefore, must take full responsibility for what they do. We all must use our hearts to push our community development forward.

7.1.3 Utilising Social Media

Some participants had concerns about communication between each other because they often had issues around misinterpreted messages. Communication is a crucial factor in the process of Al-Mubarak Community's development. When there are misunderstandings, it affects people individually and can cause other community problems at the same time. Khadijah observed that "All Al-Mubarak Community members must examine their communication intensely. It can inevitably induce a trust-building process in the community as well."

On a daily basis, all Al-Mubarak Community members use the social media platform "LINE" (<https://line.me/th/>) as a communicative channel to inform all members about events, activities, trading and small businesses operating in the community. Imam Shafei noted "Sometimes, I posted Islamic teachings in order to give some advice to our members. But I had to review what I am doing in this way. Yes. I used to give up, but I never lost hope."

Khadijah was happy that “Our Imam is always at the mosque. He uses social media daily – the Line Group – to inform us about the events and guests' arrival.” At the same time, one retired teacher commented:

I wanted to know and learn from Isan Muslim communities. I have often listened to a conversation that we are attempting to build trust among our members. I do appreciate it. I wonder how important the media and especially social media are relevant to what's going on in the community here.

Udon Thani Muslim Football Club members expressed their opinion on trust-building online. Recently, they created a “LINE” Group as a channel for building trust and everybody takes advantage of it. They often post news and notices, for example about funerals, calls for donations and other community events. These members are helping with their expertise and skills. For instance, there was recently a funeral in their community, and they helped with the management of that funeral. Some might help dig a grave; some might be carrying out bathing rites for the corpse. This communicative channel was very useful in building mutual confidence and trust so that all could work together.

Khadijah remarked on the importance of social media in community development:

When visitors come to the mosque, the Imam informs us via 'Al-Mubarak Community's Line Group'. We come to the mosque to greet and welcome our guests. Those guests like to say to us that “We feel delighted and comforted to see you all. How beautifully united you are.” This is a perception of the guests regarding our community that I have often received.

7.1.4 Making Living Space

Many participants recognised that in its development Al-Mubarak Community must seek a shared future for Muslims and their neighbours. In a community meeting for both Muslims and Buddhists, one woman was concerned about their future. She stressed:

We needed a practical precise community plan. We have the main public road paving at the middle in our community, which should be promoted to be the 'the Road of Dharma' (virtue) for people of all faiths and generations. I believe that all of us would be interested in this idea and support it into action. Every morning and evening, this area has become a public domain for community health promotion, where the villagers exercise and go jogging.

Every day, Muslims and their neighbours use this main public road as their thoroughfare, for exercise and jogging and for exchanging their products at a small morning market. Frequently, many participants would put their products – vegetables and fruit – on tables by the main public road for their neighbours for free. Some participants proposed making this particular community public road a 'green market fair' for the villagers who wanted to sell healthy food and other local products. Participants wished to make this road a 'living space' for community members and neighbours.

Ismail, a proactive advocate for the development of the community, noted proudly that Al-Mubarak Community's main public road has served people of all ages in the village, particularly women and children who could feel comfortable and secure from dogs and drunken people.

Abdul-Rahman, a Norwegian who had just come to live in Al-Mubarak Community, offered his ideas about a living space for all:

I think this community is a small community and probably we should think about how to create such a 'meeting point' where everyone feels equal. Such a meeting point truly must belong to everyone. I believe that such an equitable space is essential. For our children, the community playground is a crucial point to bring them together. We need that kind of place where we all can talk a lot about community matters. We can share with others in the community.

7.1.5 Enabling the Spiritual Dimension

Many participants recognised that a spiritual dimension in life is essential and imperative. They wanted to make sure that their decision making in community development is based on a spiritual direction. In this they needed more collaboration from all.

In the matter of spirituality, Sarfar pointed out that it was not easy gathering for a meeting about community affairs. They have to leave some primetime activities behind, like watching their favourite TV programmes such as popular dramas, soap operas or TV series. He remarked "Our spiritual aspect must be stronger than what we desire. I do appreciate this. Even when we are in a meeting, we talk about those popular soap operas or TV series. It tests our spirituality.

Participants noted that Muslims live in the modern world. Many of the things they are familiar with, computers, smartphones, and even robots, have immensely improved Muslims' lives and the lives of all humanity. These are material resources. The Muslim community's future tasks are about the spiritual dimension of community development. These two dimensions were clear in comments. In a community meeting, Sofia, an Indonesian, one of the enthusiastic supporters of Al-Mubarak Mosque, reminded us: "Technological devices are critically imperative for our daily lives. It is supposed to represent our perseverance to use it as a potent tool for improving our well-being.

Apirat and Sarfar observed that:

Al-Mubarak Community must inevitably contemplate the spiritual challenge in a rapidly changing technology-driven society, and that such a spiritual dimension of community development requires love and compassion from religious teachings for us to work together with others.

Fareeda has a remarkable story. Before moving to Al-Mubarak Community Fareeda saw that many members who lived far away – over 100 kilometres from this community – would still come to join in events and activities. She later decided to move to this community and become a new settler. Since then, she has observed a sense of spiritual kinship among the community members. She had previously perceived that this was gradually fading away.

When she decided to wear her Hijab, she felt that her public life changed hugely from where she had always been in the past. It was tough to say anything about this new life, but a family issue became the turning point for her. At the very beginning, her husband disagreed on her decision to wear a Hijab. However, later he accepted this. It seemed to her the Hijab was nothing but a great honour that God gave to all Muslim women. She said, "I am very grateful to wear it."

Fareeda said that wearing a Hijab in public was no longer a dilemma or any obstacle, or even a shortcoming. On the other hand, she was looking beyond what she was wearing. She thought that Thai society must recognise the potential all Thai people have, not just

their physical features or the clothes they dressed in. If she got rejected and lost a job because of her Hijab, she would not regret it. She added "God will always give us a better choice. Just trust in Him."

On the spiritual dimension of Al-Mubarak Community's development, Imam Shafei stated:

As Muslims, our mission is simple – be humble with people around us as the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessing be Upon Him) did. Maybe in the future, they would be our strong protection and support for our community. Muslims must therefore be friendly always.

By 2018, Al-Mubarak Mosque had built its new building for Al-Quranic teaching and other affairs. Imam Shafei and all mosque members decided to create this new multi-purpose building, which was constructed by Buddhist neighbours and funded by Muslims all across the country. The opening ceremony was held in February 2019. Hajji Hasan Samadeh supported fundraising for this project, inviting his friends and other Bangkok supporters to contribute. Apirat said:

Hajji Hasan Samadeh is still the leading supporter of Al-Mubarak Mosque. So, our current Imam might, I thought, think about what our forefathers did in the past. Imam might apply something good for the community, particularly for Al-Mubarak Mosque. Consequently, Hajji Hasan never left the community behind even though his brother 'Kru Haroon' had passed away. He generously donated his land for Al-Mubarak Mosque. He accepted his full responsibility to adequately support all the mosque projects, including its new building of learning, which marked its opening ceremony recently.

In the meantime, the Mualaf Club had completed a new building for its headquarters. This building is named 'The Centre for Islamic Ethics and Social Development'. The club has raised money from donations given by Muslims nationwide, particularly from a number of devout Muslim families in the Isan region. The Saudi Government, led by the Saudi Embassy to Thailand, fully supported this centre's inauguration ceremony on January 19-20, 2019.

All members of the first Muslim generation of Al-Mubarak Community committed themselves to make this community possible with fundraising from Muslims nationwide. Al-Mubarak Community had worked historically with some Muslim countries such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Both countries continued to support several Al-Mubarak Community organisations – the FEDMIN Foundation and the Isan Mualaf Club – through their embassies and development and humanitarian agencies in Thailand.

Both these Muslim countries often grant quotas for two to five active Muslims leaders from the Isan region to perform Hajj in the two Holy cities, Mecca city and Medina city, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They also continue to help provide date palm, Islamic books, the Noble Quran, which is printed by King Fahd Printing Complex, and some budgets for many mosques throughout the region to buy food for the members of those mosques to have 'Iftar meal' – the evening meal for breaking the fast – during the Holy month of Ramadan.

Jamilah expressed her view on the partnership that Al-Mubarak Community had with many people and networks, both organisations and individuals, whose intention was to help develop this community and see it sustained. She said:

Al-Mubarak Community is lucky to have many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars who often visited this community. They continuously helped us strengthen the community and, at the same time, we have our members who can support all organisations very well. I think that is 'community development' in my perception.

Patinya gave his view on partnership at the individual level. Initially, the local government had constructed the main public road that crossed the community. But recently its new reconstruction had been supported by a Thai Muslim businessman whose mother lived in the community. That businessman often visited his mother and siblings and consistently donated his wealth to Al-Mubarak Mosque and the FEDMIN Foundation. Patinya said “My uncle is willing to help our community grow. He also intends to see our community is a friendly place for all.”

Apirat reinforced this:

Al-Mubarak Community is committed to helping and supporting both old members and newcomers to be in a good position in a new environment. If they intended not to stay here longer, at least we can count them as a new network for our community at the end of the day. The community can positively make a balancing network for a better community.

Khadijah said that Al-Mubarak Community's connections and networks with its first generation's places of origins, families and relatives had served this community well and were also growing. The networks of their relatives had implicitly become essential to help create an equitable space of participation for the people nationally and internationally. She reaffirmed this partnership for community development:

Initially, we built this community with relatives' full participation and support. They wanted us to reach our dream of making such a Muslim community in the Isan region. Yes, they are our important partners and network for this community.

7.1.6 Bridging the Intergenerational Transition Gap

Many participants considered that people involved in community development transition must open their hearts to learn more from others. Knowledge and experiences from all generations were undoubtedly valuable assets to the community.

Jamilah shared her view on the community's intergenerational transition among Al-Mubarak Community members. It needed serious participation from the next generation as they were expected to be successors in this community. She said:

Both elders and the next age group must share ideas and experience with each other. Sometimes, the community might require some experts on community development who are not our members but have big hearts to participate in our task.

In the meantime, Khadijah reflected that all community organisations should bring in the next generation to take responsibility and accountability in their mission and tasks. She said "We all must take a risk. We cannot wait if we want a sustainable community to be

practical. A big gap among generations is wider. So, we must bridge that gap as soon as we can.

In a community meeting, all participants raised issues relating to how to transition this community to the next generation. Fatimah explained “We inherit from those Muslim pioneers in the past. We are currently trying to build this particular community in different ways in which we can make it sustainable for the next generation.

Some participants were worried about the challenge of maintaining and improving the reputation which had been achieved by the community’s founding fathers into the next generation. Fatimah expressed her concern:

Al Mubarak Community development requires more people to participate in many issues. There is a wider gap among generations' perspectives on community development matters, but community members have potential and can do the best things for their future.

In a focus group for Udon Thani Muslim Football Club, one member stressed that football had played a vital role as a linkage that had brought generations together. His age group and the next generation were bound to get to know one another through football. He also emphasised that:

It is beneficial to create such a good relationship among generations as well. If we have a healthy relationship among generations, we can do many things for the betterment of our community. We gradually develop the community. Muslims in the inner city are living scattered. However, my generation will again create that kind of community.

One of the youngest footballers explained that he had come from the countryside and just moved to seek a better job in Udon Thani city. But he was impressed with the invitation of Mr Abdullah Mongkhondee, a senior member, who always encouraged him to build a robust relationship among the F.C. members. He said:

Because of the characteristics of the senior members of the F.C., the second generation of Al-Mubarak Community, who are most friendly and kind to new generation – youth like me – can robustly maintain this club or even our community sustainably and practically.

Senior F.C. members also had to motivate and inspire young people in the Muslim Community of Udon Thani province to play football together. Lek, one of the F.C. founding members, explained:

We are worried about our youth; we often welcome them to have informal dinners and talks with the team. We sincerely endeavour to motivate those youth – who are either studying or out of the schools – to join our group. So far, some have lost their way. We must protect them from drugs.

Apirat continued to be optimistic about community transition. He stressed the creative thinking of the younger generation. For example, Mr Abdullah Mongkhondee, Mr Idrees Pathan and Dr Preeda's sons, who were in the second generation, had their own ideas of moving the community forward. He said "They all love their community; they can see how to work together to develop this community. Yes, they might have some ideas to build up this community differently. We should never worry about this community in their hands.

Fatimah reflected on the second generation in the community, saying:

Nowadays, they have come of age and become significant human resources for our community development. I am hoping that they will inherit from his legacies and characteristics as well. In my opinion, our younger generation is still respectful of old age; they continue to maintain what the previous generation did. Mr Abdullah, a stepson of Kru Haroon, is still following what Kru Haroon did to improve this community culturally and religiously.

Many participants had confidence that newcomers would happily follow the legacies of Kru Haroon, and what his generation had done for a better future in this community.

From Khadijah's perspective as a member of the first generation, the FEDMIN Foundation had been the primary focus of the first generation of Muslims. Much had already changed. The new members had other organisations which they attended. At times, the FEDMIN Foundation was taken for granted by newcomers whose interest was closer to Al-Mubarak Mosque than the FEDMIN Foundation. She also noted:

Currently, the FEDMIN Foundation is only a place for greeting our guests even though it is the first Muslim organisation in this community and the entire Isan region. It already served our wellbeing and provided Muslim communities with vast opportunities for over 20 years.

Some participants admitted that the next generation might think the ideas of the first generation are out of date. They might need to discover their own way to move the community forwards. Hanafi, an active second-generation member said:

What they wanted to do is to bring their own pathways to make this community a better place for all. Some of them just wanted a space for them to build on this community with new technology and ideas.

Khadijah said that her generation talk less now about transferring their notions to the next generation but that the community must start talking about generational transition.

As I see it, we do not know what our next generation is thinking about the future of this community. We all should wait and see. Sometimes, their thoughts might be better than what we think about them; they might keep it in their minds. I am always optimistic about our future. Do not forget one thing that our future is in their hands. That is true; we cannot reject it. Perhaps we must think about ourselves more deeply. To my mind, all generations, no doubt, feel that they belong to this community, and we all are intended to do good for this community for sure.

Interestingly, Khadijah, Fareeda and Nurisan reflected that the founding members were a crucial key to holding this community together. They had taken care of the new generation and newcomers. The first generation has always maintained this community for their children. They had also provided them with a future that this community must deliver.

In a community meeting, Sofia who had just become an active member for the mosque, said “Most importantly, we wanted children to study and learn Islam in this community where an Islamic environment is created. We all must pass an Islamic atmosphere and knowledge on to the next generation to maintain this community ahead.

Dawan reflected on the future, saying: “There is one thing I would be begging of all of you here, which is please continue your generosity and pass this message on to our next generations. This is a humble message from my heart to you all.”

7.2 The Most Critical Challenge – People are Still Reluctant

Danai and Jamilah said that people should participate in the affairs of the community, even though some may feel reluctant or insecure about being involved. People wanted to know everything that was happening, without active participation. For them being sincere was at the heart of all community matters. But community members needed to realise they were the owners of this community, not just visitors to it. Danai said “If people believe that they are only visitors who do not care about the community, that will gradually lead the community to deteriorate.”

Participants considered reluctant members needed some advice about participating in programmes or activities that community organisations tried to operate for them. Danai and Fareeda agreed those members should participate in the community with real commitment. The community must prioritise having a clear vision for all members; full participation with a spiritual purpose would then be inevitable.

During a transect walk with the first and second generation, there was one old man who was a new member who had embraced Islam only a couple of months earlier. He had just moved to Al-Mubarak Community to live with his sister. He explained that his sister had lived in the community for 20 years and acknowledged that Al-Mubarak Community was a relatively peaceful community, and his sister had been recognised by people here. He was pleased that she could do good deeds for members of the community and her neighbours.

Aminah said that her older brother practised prayers in private. He continued to lack the confidence to pray at the mosque with other members, but he intended to join them as soon as possible. Aminah added “I always prompt him to go to the mosque and to gradually learn Islam without any frustration and disappointment.”

Fareeda and Fatimah recognised that such encouragement must be a proactive response to people who were reluctant to engage with the community. Such participation

is essential to community capacity building. In the meantime, Jamilah and Apirat shared the view that community participation requires an understanding of the roles in which people were best able to serve their community. People had the right to give their leaders some advice while monitoring the actions of those leaders whose duties required them to work for the community.

Fatimah, Fareeda and Khadijah commented that people's engagement was essential to Al-Mubarak Community's development. The community needed more active participation. People should engage with all activities that take place in their community and existing organisations.

In a focus group for Muslim women, some participants, including Khadijah, stated that participation should be based on everybody's experiences, skills and expertise. All had been trained to be professionals in different ways. If community participation in Al-Mubarak Community was to be successful there had to be sufficient space provided for everyone to apply their potential to develop and improve the community.

Apirat, Patinya and Muslimah noted that fortunately all Al-Mubarak Community members knew one another well. They knew who was in this community and who was good at doing this job or that job. Members understood who could make their most useful contribution in which area or organisation. Participation requires diversity and the different skills, expertise, and experiences of all members.

In the case of Al-Mubarak Community, a sense of belonging was fundamental to participation. Imam Shafei, Jamilah, Sultan and Danai said that such a sense of belonging was critical in helping Al-Mubarak Community to move forward. If people have this feeling of belonging, they will more determinedly dedicate their best efforts to protect community resources and restore physical infrastructure like roads, homes, and other community domains. Danai observed:

The whole membership of our community are stakeholders of what appears in the community. So, a sense of belongingness to our community is likewise a concrete symbol in which we all can demonstrate our admiration and loyalty towards this community where we all belong.

Khadijah, Ismail, Patinya, Farida, Imam Shafei and other participants observed that the people of Al-Mubarak Community participated in their daily lives and activities in the places where they lived, namely; Al-Mubarak Mosque, the SWT School, the FEDMIN Foundation, Udon Thani Club for Muslim Youth, the Isan Mualaf Club, on the roads, in the community shops, at the Non-Sung SAO, in the markets, at their homes, at the temple, on the football field, at the aerobic club and in other public places like lakes and wells. Danai and Hamidah reflected on how those places became integral parts of the life in which people on the ground tried to participate and engage with one another to improve their quality of life and their own community. Khadijah also noted: "People's participation and engagement can maintain and improve these places so that the entire community and the village can use them".

7.3 Summary

This chapter focused on the core research question about Al-Mubarak Community's development and future. In Al-Mubarak Community, participants admitted, "community development is like a marathon and a bitter medicine but good for community health". Al-Mubarak Community members stressed that Muslims and Buddhists needed to work together on its developmental journey.

Participants unanimously recognised that people are at the heart of the Al-Mubarak Community, and people need empowerment and encouragement among themselves and an intergenerational transition process for the future. Trust building and shared consultation were recognised as effective instruments for Al-Mubarak Community's development process and practice. Social media tools including "LINE" Group and Facebook are used as effective information tools, both for the sharing of news and information and for trading goods and food and other community purposes.

The spiritual dimension of Al-Mubarak Community's development process and practice was seen as fundamental. Most participants saw this spiritual dimension as an essential part of transforming and reforming themselves and their community to be close to their religion. Participants got involved in activities in the community to please God and in the hope of being with Him.

Bridging the gap between generations was seen as critical to first, second, and third generation Muslims. Each generation has its own way to develop and improve the community to which they belong. But they are still working together as the "People of Al-Mubarak" who intend to build this community as a peaceful and sustainable place for all.

As part of Al-Mubarak Community's development it remains critical that every member is welcomed and invited to join in activities and events, especially newcomers who need time to adjust and become familiar with this new environment. Many participants indicated that Al-Mubarak Community must prioritise its clear vision and action for all members - old and new – with full spiritual participation and engagement. Participants acknowledged the success of the Al-Mubarak Community in providing sufficient space for everyone to apply and unleash their potential for the development of the community at large.

CHAPTER 8: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR AL-MUBARAK COMMUNITY

This last Findings chapter responds to the research question on sustainable Al-Mubarak community development as well as identifying some concerns about environmental issues: air pollution, climate change, noise, severe flooding, forest conservation, waste and water management. This chapter draws on a blended narrative style incorporating the following 2 themes; sustainable development for Al-Mubarak Community and sustainable community development with my fieldwork observation, transect walks and research journal data.

Participants often discussed the idea that Al-Mubarak Community needed to think more about what had been achieved and what had failed since its establishment. Fatimah and Fareeda felt that the sustainability of Al-Mubarak Community remained challenging. A process of soul searching on the future of the community was inevitable and necessary. Indeed, Apirat observed that "Such sustainable development needs time to get there, not just an urgent and fast process."

Khadijah, Preeda and Apirat shared their expectation that building a sustainable community required the genuine collaboration of all community members. For example, the community might set up a group of people to support and increase community members' income. In the opinion of these three participants, the ageing people in the community were an invaluable asset who were contributing something good for their community. For sustainability, Al-Mubarak Community must count on them too.

Imam Shafei remarked that Al-Mubarak Community has three functional characteristics that could sustain it into the future. 1) The members who get involved in its affairs. 2) All construction and buildings that existed in the area are useful for community development; and 3) Faithfulness in religion means this community and society can survive.

Fatimah, Hanafi, Sultan, and Imam Shafei suggested that sustainable development for Al-Mubarak Community requires the engagement of its new generation, who adore their community.

Apirat and Fatimah both agreed that the community could positively sustain itself, but that people should ask hard questions about its future sustainability. Sustainable development for Al-Mubarak Community requires more jobs and employment as essential keys to growing and increasing its population.

8.1 The Distinctive Characteristics

Several characteristics reflect the uniqueness of sustainable development in Al-Mubarak Community; measuring up to the spiritual aspect of sustainable development, dealing with the onslaught of urbanisation, seeking new kinds of jobs and employment, sharing constructive contributions for the sake of broader society, initiating educational opportunities for the next generation and being concerned about a sustainable environment. These characteristics are discussed in turn in the following sections.

8.1.1 Measuring up to the Spiritual Aspect

Some participants, like Danai and Fareeda, commented that sustainable development required a spiritual aspect that could make an impact on the public policy process and community management for Al-Mubarak Community. The next generation had to contemplate what was needed to achieve sustainability. Fareeda, Nurisan and Jamilah emphasised that a sustainable Al-Mubarak Community required a balanced life for all its members. It needed economic aspects, social aspects like health, family elements and, simultaneously, spiritual aspects as a compulsory element of sustainable development and practice. The community members held different kinds of jobs, experiences, and education, which were the most significant segment of sustainable development, but everyone should understand its religious aspects.

8.1.2 Encountering the Onslaught of Urbanisation

Many villagers had sold their lands to investors from outside the area. Some of the paddy fields had become homestay resorts for local tourism. Some places were gradually changing into housing estates. Many agricultural areas in the village had been transformed into the Udon Thani Industrial Estate, a vast industrial development megaproject in the Isan region. Honda Motor Company was gradually expanding its space into the paddy fields of the village area. There was a local ice cream factory, a joint venture with a Singaporean business partnership already located in Ban Nong Muean Thao village.

Some participants like Prathin, Khadijah and villagers in the research area were worried about the impact of urbanisation. At the same time members were happy about more jobs coming to the village, and the villagers getting jobs locally rather than going to big cities such as Bangkok. As a result of the growing urbanisation, land prices in Ban Nong Muean Thao village and other nearby villages had also increased rapidly.

The Udon Thani Industrial Estate started operating near the village in 2018. It is going to be a new workplace for villagers and the younger generation. Participants were concerned about the environmental issues, as the industrial estate was promoted as a 'green industry'. Some participants perceived that the STW School students could help prospective companies and interested investors in the Estate particularly those from Muslim countries, who might visit and engage with Al-Mubarak Community. Both local people and students might take advantage of making good relationships with those businesspeople.

Participants like Apirat, Khadijah and Jamilah and Patinya observed that Al-Mubarak Community members were familiar with modernity. Most of them had worked and spent their time in the city daily. Their view was that the community could manage the problem as an issue of urbanisation. But they needed a community where they could live

harmoniously with the people of different faiths who aspired to visit and settle in and near to the community.

Participants admitted that Al-Mubarak Community had gradually become an integral part of urban society of the Isan region. Apirat predicted:

I think our community will remain the same in the sense of conserving our identity. We cannot deny such modernity or globalisation. We have been here for over 20 years. In 20-30 years from now this community will be completely changed into a new town in Udon Thani province.

Khadijah stressed that:

I do not know how much this community would be changing, while many homes, buildings, and factories are being constructed. Right now, I do not see that we respond to these challenges. It seems that we are not much aware of these issues, which we are about to confront. On the other hand, many of our elder members were willing to move into this community for religious reasons. Those elder people wanted to be close to the mosque.

8.1.3 Seeking New Kinds of Jobs and Employment

Some Buddhist participants observed that since the Honda Motor Company had set up in Ban Nong Muean village, there were both good and bad things happening in the village. People could get some jobs; and it developed the area. Many people liked such development. At the same time, Jamilah observed it hired many more employees who needed more residences or apartments. Therefore, there were businesspeople who grasped the opportunity to do housing construction work for employees resulting in uncertainty around population growth and development.

Some participants observed that few people in the village were capable of working for the Honda Motor Company. The company tended to hire skilled or educated workers, not unskilled labourers — generally, the villagers just had primary education. Most of them were unqualified, and some might work as daily wage employees.

Buddhist participants pointed out that their sons and daughters were fortunate to have improved access to education (for example high vocational certificates and bachelor's degrees), and those younger people had more chances than their earlier generation.

Some of the younger generation studied and sought jobs with salaries. They had their own way of life which was different from that of their parents and grandparents who were farmers. One Buddhist participant asked:

Will they replace us to continue the way of life that our forefathers have given to us.? Our descendants and posterity are not capable of continuing rice production as farmers. Just a few can take it seriously. Most of them prefer enjoyment and luxury but never needed to work hard as their fathers and mothers did.

Another Buddhist farmer stated that they had indulged their children without punishment. The young generation might sell the paddy fields for the money. They did not want to be farmers anymore. A farmer had to be extremely patient and work hard, but a farmer is not honoured by other people. The rest of the paddy lands, eventually, had to be sold. There would be no conservation for the future generation.

In Al-Mubarak Community, Aminah, Nurisan and Fareeda reflected on the Isan Mualaf Club's attempt to support funding for members who were interested in occupational training. Participants thought all organisations must help people find new markets and business resources and thoroughly train them to be entrepreneurs. Fareeda and Fatimah observed that Al-Mubarak Community, through its organisations, could provide some hope for people who wanted to seek new jobs and a new life, but they needed time to learn more about how to be entrepreneurs or new merchants in the Isan region.

Imam Shafei and his family recently attempted to pilot a livestock project with goats, to promote alternative jobs for his brothers and sisters in Al-Mubarak Community. He rented some areas from one family to be a pasture for this livestock. The livestock project had grown slowly. He reflected on his initiative, saying:

We need understanding and participation from our members about how we can generate more income by running our own business to support the mosque's duties effectively. At the same time, we want to increase the permanent income for our members.

Fatimah was blunt in her opinion “Without employment and jobs, there is no sustainable community development in Al-Mubarak Community. And little did I know that the mosque is thinking about job creation programmes but requires time to do that.”

Ismail and Jamilah both explained that the STW School was initiating an ambitious plan to generate a so-called 'smart farm', a future project for sustainability. This project would create an example for people to think about a new way for job creation based on environmental awareness. This project would be linked to the ‘Sufficiency Economy Philosophy’ or SEP also known as the King’s theory, after the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. It is about a development approach based on integrating physical, social, and spiritual dimensions to create sustainable development. The school was determined to put this idea into action.

Danai and Fareeda observed that some families were inspired to start doing their gardens following SEP. It was a big trend across all Thai society. Thais realised that they needed to do more about sustaining their cost of living and surviving on less income, and the SEP idea was the answer for them. Hamidah's, Mariam's and Nurisun's families, were experimenting with SEP.

The SEP approach that they applied involved planting three things: rice, fruit or vegetables, and perennial plants. As a result of doing this, they obtained the following outcomes: 1) they consumed their own product, 2) they distributed their products to neighbours, 3) they used some kinds of annual plants, Chinese cabbage, morning glory, collards etc and 4) they earned some income from the products.

8.1.4 Sharing Good Contributions for the Sake of the Broader Society

Many participants, including Fatimah, Hamidah, Apirat, Preeda, and Ismail asked, 'What are we doing as individuals, as a group of people, for the sake of the people in this Isan region and the entire Thai society? Have we forgotten our task and duties from the very beginning of the establishment of Al-Mubarak Community?

Apirat, Sarfar and Ismail recognised that Al-Mubarak Community continued to contribute prosperity and development to the village. The community had provided a smooth road for all, and the land price continued to be higher partly because the STW School was located in this village. Often, Muslims with high profiles, like the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, the President of the National Assembly of Thailand, and the former Secretary-General of ASEAN, have visited this community, so that their neighbours paid more attention and benefited from these visits.

Likewise, Khadijah, Patinya and Fareeda considered that the existence of Al-Mubarak Community helped their neighbours in making Ban Nong Muean Thao village known and recognised publicly at the regional and national levels. Fatimah and Hamidah recommended that all members of Al-Mubarak Community dedicate themselves to growing the community environment together with others. Muslims had to engage with and participate in all programmes that could support sustainability, at least cleaning the community and the village. Khadijah advised that people must:

Never think that Muslims are better than others. Never think that we are more prosperous than our neighbours, or we are more knowledgeable than other villagers. Whatever we do (e.g., constructing a road, building a school, donating some money to the village's affairs) will ultimately help sustain our community and our village.

8.1.5 Initiating Educational Opportunities for the Next Generation

On education, Imam Shafei explained that Al-Mubarak Mosque had launched an Educational Fund that supported children in the community to gain their educational opportunities, in both religious and secular educational systems. Its essential purpose was to encourage the community to sustain educational matters as the top priority. In 2019, the mosque appointed a special committee on education.

Initially, the Fund collected 20,000 Baht (1,000 NZD) as its first contribution, but it demanded more for the future. Imam and the committees wanted the next generation to achieve higher education. Those young people would eventually take care of their community more than teachers or other experts recruited from outside communities as had been done before, and this was not sustainable. Imam Shafei believed the fund would be beneficial to the entire community in long-term community development.

In the STW School scholarships were provided for Muslim students and even for students of other faiths. The STW School provided 'Zakat' for low-income or poor families, which gave them an excellent opportunity to send their children to the STW School without any tuition fee. Fareeda, Jamilah, Mustafa and Patinya agreed with the STW School being committed to providing educational opportunities for both Muslims and non-Muslim students, in different ways, to make sure that those students could take advantage of the opportunities which the school provided.

Some participants, including Preeda, Patinya and Ismail, observed that it was a tough mission to persuade all community members to support the STW School to flourish fully. But the school tried its best to grant its scholarships and Islamic education to their children, whose rights and opportunity were required to be guarded and supported by the STW School. The parents were also worried about their children's future in the community. Fareeda observed that "The STW School provides and keeps such a familiar culture, quality education and good environment which we all should be proud of."

8.2 Concerns About Environmental Issues

Participants shared their concerns about how to manage natural resources in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. Buddhist participants were willing to envision their community getting a solid management system for natural resources. They wanted to manage and utilise natural water sources wisely. In the village, there was no irrigation system. During summer season, people had to let the village's pond dry up and had less water.

In 2019, people suffered from severe droughts. In my research area, people only planted rice once a year. They only used water from Nong Moei pond for the water supply for the village, which was administered by the local government Subdistrict Administration Organization (SAO). In the draught, they utilised the water supply provided by the Provincial Waterworks Authority.

In the village and Al-Mubarak Community side, people used water from three sources, which were: the water supply provided by the Provincial Waterworks Authority; water supply for the village administrated by local government SAO; and groundwater. Most people purchased drinking water from local factories delivered directly to their homes and shops daily. One Buddhist woman who worked as a farmer said:

Besides, we, in turn, stopped drinking rainwater. We heard that drinking rainwater is not safe and pure enough to drink. It is because of air pollution caused by the chemical substances. Unlike in the past when we consumed rainwater daily.

One of the critical issues that participants were concerned about was wastewater management. In the village, there was no cesspit for wastewater. Some people had to throw it out into a natural watercourse that they had in their fields. Some homes used nature-soil to manage wastewater in this village.

People needed comprehensive management for the ecosystem at the village level. SAO, a small local government organisation, which could not do much, desired to be a municipality with the capacity and legal instruments to handle all environmental problems. If they could do that, the area would benefit from a higher standard of environmental management, including around water issues. In the case of the Honda Motor Company, participants noted that the company raised the soil high but did no cesspit building. As the water flowed, because of the rain, some areas in the village were inundated. People were informed that the company was willing to fix this issue by creating waterways around the company's grounds.

Some participants held the view that Al-Mubarak Community must do more to consider the significance of a sustainable environment, as part of sustainable development for the community overall. Fatimah and Apirat pointed out that a sustainable environment was about a development process based exclusively on the awareness of the environmental issues, and that demanded a huge focus on what the community aspired to achieve in the long term. Such a sustainable environment also required more effort to take care of this community in its entirety.

Participants like Imam Shafei, Danai and Khadijah said that this pressing issue was not a straightforward one. They felt the words 'sustainable development' were very relevant to their community because all forms of life must find a way to exist in any environment. Such a sustainable environment becomes the primary determinant of all daily actions.

Some participants said it was critical to protect and conserve the community's environment as much as possible so they could live without being harmful to nature. The environment must be maintained for the well-being of humankind in a sustainable future.

Danai and some participants agreed that the community should support planting more trees in Al-Mubarak Community. Danai said, "All trees are the source of our breath." All community members were obliged to keep their community water resource suitable for fishes and other freshwater-dwelling animals. These natural resources are the source of food from which all people benefited. In the meantime, all villagers had to protect their public domains continuously. Most importantly, they had to stop burning plastics, wood fragments and wastepaper.

In the case of Al-Mubarak Mosque, it had recently launched an initial project for sustainable community development among all community members, called the Waste Recycling Bank (WRB) project. The WRB project aimed at encouraging each individual and family to collect waste for recycling and then take it to a big tank provided by the mosque. Those recycled items would be selected for sale or given back to the people who wanted to make use of them. This project aimed to instruct all community members

about practising discipline in taking care of the environment and the rights of neighbours. This project was a challenge to all members around the need to be aware of environmental circumstances.

Imam Shafei described the environment in two forms: 1) The physical environment, which meant buildings like estate developments, ice factory, ice-cream factory; these tremendously impacted lives and was the way to community development. Recently, the community, particularly the mosque area, suffered from severe floods caused by land-use changes from construction. 2) The personal environment meant all members' behaviours in relation to other community members and neighbours and need to set an excellent example for others who wanted to make a final decision to move into this community.

In the observations of Hamidah, Fareeda and Imam Shafei, the behaviours of Muslims could make an enormous impact on the environment. They recognised that all organisations and Al-Mubarak Mosque were not doing enough to attract others to join and participate, but Muslims' actions and behaviours for both humanity and the environment were the core factor that could convince other people to join this community.

At the village level, a few participants referred to Udon Taveesarp 1990 Co., Ltd, the local dealership of Honda Motor Co., Ltd, in Udon Thani. This company was a significant local company representing Honda in Udon Thani province with a Honda Showroom, Service Centre, and a paint factory. The company had bought twenty rai (32,000 square metres) of land which provided for the removal of their production base from Ayutthaya province in central Thailand to Udon Thani province.

For some participants, the relationship between Honda and the village was relatively healthy. Overall, people in the research area had no problem with the company. Some participants shared their opinions on the presence of the company, saying that many people were happy to sell their paddy lands and receive the money from the company. Some said Isan people were naturally welcoming and kind to others. When asked about

fundamental safety and environmental issues, participants replied that Honda's construction was under the high-quality control of the Ministry of Industry. It was based on laws they relied on. However, some participants pointed out that the company caused the floods in the village due to land-use changes from construction. Before they arrived, there were no severe floods in this area.

Some members of the community often volunteered to help keep the community roads clean and tidy. They walked around the community and picked up the rubbish (plastic bags, bottles) from the road by their home. Sometimes, they tried to help repair and fix the community roads. Danai said "There is a sense of community volunteerism which depends on the willingness and capacities that people can contribute to community development in their free time."

Participants, including Khadijah and Mariam, said that initially only a few families in the village devoted their efforts to promoting sustainability. They started planting various kinds of trees and producing home-grown vegetables without chemicals. They often tried to convince neighbours to do the same. But for most people it was a priority to survive their economic conditions even if they agreed about this very concerning issue. One mother of two boys said: "We need to help create that neighbourhood environment so that everybody can be comfortable to be part of this community."

Jamilah and Patinya commented on the STW School, and how its Boy Scouts programme brought the students close to nature. It instructed the students to better understand how to protect and sustain environmental resources – for example, by looking at natural wells during a camping trip. The school also encouraged its primary students to initiate their own environmental projects such how to reduce the use of plastic bags.

Danai and Ismail shared their concern that the environment was in decline in various changing ways. People were seeing their environment gradually decay. The biodiversity of the forests was becoming extinct. Humankind suffered terribly from the destruction of the climate and lower quality of roadways, wastewater, air pollution, and so on.

Participants identified major environmental issues of concern namely: air pollution, climate change, noise, severe flooding, forest conservation, waste and water management

8.2.1 Air Pollution

Many participants, including Apirat, Hamidah and Khadijah described Al-Mubarak Community as a rural community in Udon Thani province because it was located about ten kilometres from Udon Thani downtown. There were many beautiful paddy fields surrounding the community. Thus, the air remains fresh for living. However, air pollution did occur sometimes. Primary causes of air pollution included toxic fumes from cars (the least significant contributor), factories, and seasonal burning of wood fragments and crop fields – ricks and rice straw – before and after the harvest season, which was done to enable suitable planting.

8.2.2 Climate Change

Most of the Buddhist women's focus group were farmers. In 2019, during my fieldwork, people suffered a lot from severe drought; they had below-average rice production in the harvest season. The drought damaged almost all the crops and the seasonal rains eventually came at least a month late. Meanwhile, when the rain did come, it harshly devastated their areas with sudden floods and storms, particularly in May and June 2019. It was a 'new normal' phenomenon, uncertain and unpredictable.

Some members of the football club stated that they were concerned about climate change, and they also realised that humanity was the root cause of that catastrophe. As farmers, some participants worried at the same time about climate change transforming

the environment, not only in this village but also throughout the world. The three seasons – the Summer, the Rainy and the Winter – had changed tremendously: the winter became shorter, and the summer and rainy seasons lasted longer. It had been like that for ten years in the Isan region. One farmer reflected:

Now, you can see the high temperature, but for the sun's heat, what would become of the living things on earth? When I was planting in the rice fields, it was so heated, it never happened ever before. No doubt climate change has affected our lives.

8.2.3 Noise

People who lived around the factories commented that the community faced noise issues as the machines started working at night. Some even complained to the factories, particularly the ice factory, about the noise, but nothing happened. Since then, people seemed to be apathetic about the problem.

Participants like Fareeda and Fatimah, and some Buddhist neighbours, commented that the government – particularly local government – involved local people in fair referenda before allowing those factories to be constructed.

In the ice factory case, Patinya and Jamilah shared their concern about the dynamics around constructing an ice factory in the village, saying that the factory undoubtedly affected the whole village and Al-Mubarak Community. The implications of the construction were unexpected. Therefore, a public hearing was a tool to resolve the issue of concern.

After the factory's construction, the local authority invited all stakeholders, including representatives of the factory and the villager claimants, to a meeting. But nothing has changed because of that public hearing. Some homes that were close to the factory still suffer from the noise that the factory produces.

The factory made a promise to deal with this problem. After the public hearing, a monitoring team was set up while the machinery remained working 24/7, but it never

stopped the noise being produced. So, the villagers had to continue to live as if there was no noise pollution problem in the area.

Fareeda and Khadijah commented that the authorities did some projects without asking people. They allowed the private sector – big and small companies – to build their factories in our village unobstructed. Ever since the factories had appeared, the buildings impacted people's lives and the environment tremendously, by producing severe floods. The ice factory issue was directly related to the environmental issue, but no public environmental agencies in local areas were active in monitoring it.

8.2.4 Severe Flooding

During the fieldwork, on September 2, 2019, the entire Isan region was inundated with severe floods. More rain was forecast throughout the region. Immediately, Khon Kaen province became a devastated area with widespread flooding, and although Storm 'Podul' passed beyond Thailand, it was replaced by a new storm threat.

The Ban Phai district of Khon Kaen province was damaged by flash flooding that weekend, with some areas up to three metres deep in water. Vehicles were immersed, and people sought safety on the top floors of their homes. Many people were evacuated to refuges on dry ground.

Mustafa, Ismail and Apirat observed that the FEDMIN Foundation at that time coordinated giving help and support to people in need, regardless of faith affiliations. FEDMIN Foundation, local Muslim community leaders and other national organisations responded to people in the devastated areas quickly. A humanitarian aid team used the FEDMIN headquarters in Al-Mubarak Community as their base to work jointly with other FEDMIN partners at the local, regional and national level. They cooked food and provided materials like pillows, blankets, mats, rice, and instant food for the victims. The 'coalition of mercy' continued working effectively throughout the Isan region.

Abdullah, Lek and Hanafi and other members of the football club described the vast impact of another flood back in 2017; severe floods hit the Isan region, particularly in Sakon Nakhon province, which was critically damaged in many areas, including the municipality and its airport. With collaboration of the two Muslim communities – Al-Mubarak Community and Quwatil-Islam Community – and other faith organisations, many members were sent to work hard to form a humanitarian aid network with other civil society organisations, to help those suffering in Sakon Nakhon province, regardless of whether they were Muslims or from other faiths.

In Ban Nong Muean Thao village, many paddy fields were devastated by the storms and the mosque was inundated because the mosque area was lower than the main road and water drained there from residential areas nearby. The community recently attempted to solve this problem by laying down water drains to pump the rainwater out of the mosque area. Additionally, the government pledged to compensate those people affected and in need due to the floods and storms.

Khadijah and some Buddhist farmers stated that the villagers had to struggle for their life every day. They encountered storms with heavy rain, but people had never given up doing the best they could for their crops and plantations.

8.2.5 Forest Conservation

Two Buddhist participants, Jamilah and Khadijah, said that they aspired to grow more trees but did not have adequate land to plant them, nor was there a public area to plant trees. All land was private property. Soon, many trees and woods would be cut down to build homes, for estate development and for other agricultural purposes.

Aminah and Sarfar pointed out that such a big forest existed opposite the SAO office, which was located near the community. This forest remained abundant. Aminah noted:

In the past, this forest used to be a cemetery for our Buddhist neighbours. Consequently, they tried to conserve this area to sustain this area. It is their belief we all as Muslims must respect.

8.2.6 Waste Management

Ismail, Khadijah and Fareeda said that every Thursday, several tons of waste in the community were collected by the SAO and thrown away on the outskirts of Udon Thani city. That area produced pollution problems for people in communities living there.

There was no solution to this matter at the provincial level. There were currently 900 tons of waste produced per day in the entire Udon Thani province. The opportunities for standard waste disposal in the province reach merely 160 tons per day. The remaining 740 tons of waste have created a crisis which includes the research area, where waste and plastic bags have become a big problem.

Jamilah also explained that the SAO was entirely responsible for waste disposal in the community because it was part of the job of SAO in its local government role. They operated one day per week. Therefore, people did not have much waste for compost. Some families only carried out waste recycling some of the time. Some dug holes to bury the waste in the ground. Jamilah said “People talked about the problems, but nothing happened. Waste management remains critical. Instead, they gave up.”

At the SWT School, the students were encouraged to initiate the so-called magic waste project, an environmental-based project which empowered the students (grade 1-6) who tackled environmental issues with inspiration in learning to reuse papers, plastics, and drinking water bottles. The pieces of waste were reused to become piggy banks.

One Buddhist teacher said that the school once invited an expert on waste management from an antique store (Wong-pa-nit Antique Store) in Udon Thani city to lecture them on how to manage all kinds of waste in daily life. Staff and students learnt a lot from such an environmentally based project. Ismail reported that the school, in association with local government, also campaigned for a waste reduction project in both the school and the village. This project motivated students to visit farms and paddy fields to get a sense of environmental preservation issues.

8.2.7 Water Management

Fareeda and Danai pointed out that people had been attempting to solve the water management issue for years. They often faced problems with the drainage system in the village. As a result, when the rainy season came, their areas were immediately inundated.

Participants like Fareeda, Fatimah and Apirat said that they wanted people to think critically about environmental problems rather than taking profits from doing business. However, the problems of floods and water management in our community remained critical.

There were two sorts of water utility in Al-Mubarak Community. The first one was surface water like natural wells and lakes. This kind of water was not utilised primarily for consumption. The second source was groundwater; this kind of water is the primary water resource people benefited from. However, while the quality of the (surface) water in the community was in fair condition for agriculture and livestock, there was not sufficient for use in annual crops or perennial plants.

Mariam and Khadijah observed that each household in the community had its own way of managing wastewater. They dig small holes to keep sewage in order. The wastewater, in the summer season, absorbed into the soil naturally. But in the rainy season, rain mixed with wastewater and gushed out into the natural waterways or waterways made by the community.

Fareeda and Patinya explained that some participants utilised freshwater from local factories for drinking water production. Some local factories delivered drinking water to the community daily. Some had their agents providing drinking water directly to the community. Some families produced drinking water themselves using water purifiers.

Overall, there was a straightforward approach for the community to obtain freshwater. On the other hand, as Fareeda and Danai observed, the community must effectively

handle the wastewater in a recycling process. And agrochemicals were a primary source of water pollution out into the paddy fields.

8.3 Summary

The chapter reveals that social/employment impacts of urbanization and air pollution, climate change, noise, severe flooding, forest conservation, waste and water management are major environmental issues facing Al-Mubarak Community and their Buddhist neighbours in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. All participants consistently noted increasing climate variability impacts especially on agriculture and flooding in the village, as well as those from more local changes in land and water use due to industrial and housing developments. They accepted these were not straightforward issues and that attempts to engage with local stakeholders, government and industry had not been successful, to date. However, their strong desire for the sustainable social and environmental development of their community was clear.

From the research findings, it is clear that Al-Mubarak Community and their Buddhist neighbours have accumulated rich capacity and strength to mobilize for facing sustainable development issues and moving their community forward themselves. In their 25-year period of being actively engaged in developing an intentional faith-based community, they have experienced a variety of community leadership styles, project dynamics in community development, and challenges. They have been led by and learned from visionary foundational leader role models, actively engaged women and younger generations in development, fostered a very robust integrated Muslim and Buddhist community neighbourhood relationship, and developed a local and regional network of inclusive organisational and infrastructure resources e.g., STW School, FEDMIN, youth groups etc. The individual, community and organizational capital is apparent: the next step would be to mobilize and focus on these upcoming challenges. As indicated at the outset, my initial research plan was to work through a Participatory Action Research project with the Al-Mubarak Community, collaboratively mobilising their

strengths to develop community driven action plans and ongoing evaluation to further their sustainable community aspirations. Unfortunately, I was effectively stranded in New Zealand for 2020-2021 by the COVID-19 outbreak and unable to return to Thailand to complete PAR Phases 3: Implementing Action Plans and 4 Evaluation and Reflection on Actions Taken. (See fuller detail in Chapter 3.4: PAR Process in Sustainable Community Development). My intention is to progress to phases 3 and 4 on my return to Thailand as a post-degree project after completing my formal studies.

The following chapter integrates the key findings and relevant literature in addressing the overarching questions driving the research.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter integrates findings from chapters 5 to 8 and relevant literature to address the 3 key research questions. It uses Thai cultural constructs to frame the discussions to give appropriate local texture and nuance for fuller understandings, not included in Western or mainstream development perspectives.

9.0 Overview

This research investigated the role of faith in Al-Mubarak Community's development and to inform public policy processes and practices that support minority faith communities in Thai civil society, with a focus on inter-generational management of local environmental issues. The project had three central research questions:

1. How does the 2017 Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand's commitment to 'protect Buddhism and other religions' translate to community development policy and practice?
2. How does the Muslim community apply their faith values in the public policy environment of community development?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities for using faith values in community development in the Udon Thani province?

The methodological framework utilised the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and used qualitative methods including, interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks, field observations and research journals. All research participants were either Muslim members of Al-Mubarak Community, or Buddhist neighbours, from diverse backgrounds representing women, men, and male youth across the three generations of settlement, from several countries of origin, and with differing occupations and socio-economic status. Many had lived and worked together in the community since its beginning.

The findings showed since its establishment in 1995, Al-Mubarak Community has evolved to be a thriving Muslim community nested within a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and predominantly Buddhist community setting in Isan, the Northeastern region of the Kingdom of Thailand. Muslim and Buddhist neighbours consistently affirmed the close, respectful, and harmonious relationships that characterised “their” community, in contrast to inter-religious group tensions and conflict in the broader S-E Asian region and the Southern Provinces of Thailand, in particular. Many Muslim participants held that Al-Mubarak Community was not just a community for Muslims, but also for other people of different faiths and backgrounds who could contribute to, and benefit from, the growth of this community. Buddhist participants noted that Al-Mubarak Community was a significant community for the Isan region, as a model where Muslims and their neighbours could live and learn together forever.

9.1 Research Question 1: How does the 2017 Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand’s commitment to ‘protect Buddhism and other religions’ translate to community development policy and practice?

9.1.1 Introduction

This section highlights and discusses the research findings and literature in answer to the first research question, using the Thai cultural constructs of *Watthanatham khwām ngīep* - the culture of silence, *Khaojai bōribot kām Ptisamphanth* - understanding the setting for daily interactions and *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* - self-reliance.

9.1.2 Watthanatham khwām ngīep – the culture of silence

A new draft Thai Constitution was the subject of a national referendum in 2016 (Thailand has had 20 constitutions since the governance transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy in 1932). The majority of Isan people and the villagers in my research area voted against this draft. Typically, they did not want to tell me why they voted against it. They just kept silent and smiled, unsurprisingly, as during the referendum period, it was

illegal to be critical of the draft and express any opposition to it in any shape or form, at public meetings, in the public media or on social media. People had no opportunity to express their opinions on this publicly. Many Thai people went to vote without reading the draft. Most Isan people I met told me they voted NO in the 2016 Thai constitutional referendum. (Nationally, there was a 61% YES vote from a 55% voter turnout, the lowest voter turnout for any election, or referendum since 1983.)

On the surface the 2017 Thai Constitution provides equally for people of the five government-recognised faith communities (Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Christian). However, the majority of research participants responded with reluctance and silence to questioning about how the constitution, politics, and public policy, related to their daily life or to decision-making on their community's development. Remaining silent was the overwhelming response to my inquiries.

In discussion on these issues there was an overwhelming culture of silence on specifics - *Watthanatham khwām ngīep*. Participants generally admitted that the Thai bureaucratic system failed to fully support people's participation and engagement in community development policy and practice.

Khwām ngīep, or silence is a dominant cultural practice deeply-rooted in Thai individual, social and political society for centuries. It is the culturally accepted practice promoting a culture of accommodation in problem-solving and face-saving politeness strategies as well (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2018). It avoids confrontation and disagreement and is also practiced in conjunction with embarrassment to indicate hesitation, and interruption is not welcomed by Thais.

There are at least two relevant "silencing" constructs at daily social interaction level. The first is *greng-jai* - not wanting to embarrass/shame or make people awkward. This includes both the speaker and/or those spoken to. The second is *por-jai*, being grateful for what you have /have been given. Both of these are handbrakes on open/direct discussion of matters of substance in daily interactions. While *silencing* hovered over my

attempts to engage participants on constitution, politics and public policy in their daily community lives that handbrake came off in the general election on 24 March 2019.

In the 2019 general election, all eight constituencies in Udon Thani province went to candidates of the Pheu Thai Party, the major opposition party to the the dictatorship. The Pheu Thai Party actually gained the highest number of seats in the country but could not displace the grouping of Government aligned parties. People had been silent in individual expression with me, but they spoke on election day via the ballot box, where anonymity was assured.

Khwām ngīep is recognised and deeply engrained as part of Thai social and political culture, as a powerful tool for compromise used in interactions at individual, social, community and political levels. It defines the safe, but restricted, zones for people to participate in and engage with community affairs. However, participatory community development requires an open, critical and refreshing atmosphere of participation and engagement, not hesitation and suspicion about expressing views about the future. There is no sustainable community without the active involvement of people in the public policy environment of community development policy and practice.

9.1.3 Khaojai bōribot kām Ptisamphanth – understanding the setting for daily interactions

The 2017 Thai Constitution carried over provisions from the 1997 and 2007 Constitutions on the freedom of religion, that all individuals are equal before the law and allowed to profess, observe, and practice any religion of their choice, though only five are formally recognised by the Thai Government. But for the first time, 'the safety of the State' in section 31, and effectively the primacy of Buddhism, were added into this constitution (The Royal Thai Government Gazette, 2017). Section 67 of the 2017 Thai Constitution states:

The State should support and protect Buddhism and other religions. In supporting and protecting Buddhism, which is the religion observed by the majority of Thai people for a long period of time, the State should promote and support education and dissemination of dharmic principles of Theravada Buddhism for the development of mind and wisdom development and shall have measures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism from being undermined in any form. The State should also encourage Buddhists to participate in implementing such measures or mechanisms. (p.17)

This mandate for the special protection of Theravada Buddhism, by supporting education, dissemination of its principles, and the establishment of measures and mechanisms in order to prevent the desecration of Buddhism in any form, is in contrast to traditional language in previous Constitutions calling for religious harmony and understanding (Rojanaphruk, 2018).

Although, the 2017 Thai Constitution recognised constructive roles for faith communities in developing the country's unity, reforms, and prosperity, opening the space for the policy implementation and consideration of implications of some of the new clauses, needs to be more seriously addressed among people of faiths and faith communities at the local level. This space for robust relationships among faith communities is relevant to the nation's effective development and reform. Al-Mubarak Community is a case study that demonstrated that robust relationship building, at the local level, among people of different faiths can be achieved.

My research found that the Isan region has been home to a tiny Muslim community living with their non-Muslim neighbours since 1900. In general, Muslims and non-Muslims (mostly Buddhists) have been residing under harmonious circumstances. In the research area, some Buddhist neighbours were concerned about Muslims in the early days of settlement of the Al-Mubarak Community, and Muslims had to prove that they were people of kindness and prosperity and were no threat to others in any way. They have done that over the past 25 years of Al-Mubarak Community's development.

The Al-Mubarak community of Muslims and their Buddhist neighbours have now supported each other, for over 25 years, to create a concrete, and robust, positive

relationship framework in their daily lives. They perceived that creating a good atmosphere in the neighbourhood effectively sustained their communities and the broader village life. My research showed that most Buddhist participants perceived that Muslims who lived in the south of Thailand might differ from Muslims who lived in the Isan region, and that Buddhist people could still stereotype all Muslims they did not know. However, Al-Mubarak Community's development was contexted in very different socio, cultural, historical, and political factors to those that underly ongoing tensions in the south. Al-Mubarak Community members never became "othered", isolated, or, a fringe part of their broader community, socially or organisationally. Muslims in the Isan region proved themselves as moderate and progressive by setting up organisations such as FEDMIN Foundation, which had a critical dynamic role as a coordinator between Muslims in the region and in other parts of the country, at the level of both organisations and individuals.

From the early days of Al-Mubarak Community's development, the FEDMIN Foundation provided a mutual platform for Muslims to get involved and engaged with their Buddhist neighbours at the community level. All participants recognised the Udon Thani Centre for Muslim Youth (merged with the FEDMIN Foundation), Al-Mubarak Mosque, the SWT School, the FEDMIN Foundation, and the Isan Mualaf Club had also played constructive and vital roles in developing and improving the Al-Mubarak Community since its establishment in 1995. Those organisations become the mechanisms for providing public, local spaces for daily relationship engagement and participation among Muslims and others.

Khaojai bəribot kān Ptisamphanth - close daily interactions - between Muslims and Buddhists appears to have been critically relevant to community building. Both communities overcame obstacles to trust each other as neighbours. My Findings' chapters confirm that Al-Mubarak Community could not stand firmly for the future without the help and support of its Buddhist neighbours. Therefore, *Khaojai bəribot kān*

Ptisamphanth, fruitful daily interaction, is the key to bringing both communities together for the future.

The Findings chapters argue for the protection of all religions requiring better understanding and fostering of daily interaction – *Khaojai bəribot kān Ptisamphanth* among faith communities on the ground at the local level. A legal framework alone cannot make people feel secure and comfortable, but it needs constructive and spontaneous actions in their daily lives by people, without being forced by any kinds of laws and orders. At the same time, a sense of security among faith communities is needed. Many participants shared their view that Buddhist people felt secure to build their homes close to the Muslim area because both sides had trust in each other, and no fear about living with the other. The research findings have addressed the notion of ‘the safety of the State’ in the 2017 Thai Constitution through *Khaojai bəribot kān Ptisamphanth* – understanding the setting for daily interactions through the production of robust relationships and constructive actions at the neighbourhood level.

9.1.4 Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng - self-reliance

As discussed earlier, the 2017 Thai Constitution provides equitably for people of the five government-recognised faith communities (The Royal Thai Government Gazette, 1997,2007; Tonsakulrungruang,2018). In principle, the Royal Thai government guards all recognised religions and promote all faith communities' constructive role in the nation's development and reform and social and religious harmony (Affatato, 2017; Rojanaphruk, 2018).

The research study, however, uncovered that at the local level, people never employed, and rarely referred to, the principles of the Constitution in promoting peace, harmony and enhancing the quality of life in community development policy and practice between these Muslim and Buddhist communities. It was seen as a static, formal law, with little significance in their daily lives. People had never considered it as a policy instrument to develop their community and did not talk about it and how it related to their everyday

lives. The people of Al-Mubarak initially mobilised using their own efforts, “self-reliance”, and swiftly learned of the genuine kindness and support of their Buddhist neighbours in establishing their community. Al-Mubarak’s Community development has been consistently characterised by *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* - self-reliance - among its members and neighbours from the outset of this community development journey, as previously described, along with self-help, mutual-help and rural development concepts, as crucial foundations for effective community development (Anyanwu, 1992; Fonchingong & Fonjong, 2002).

Findings suggest Al-Mubarak’s Muslims had developed their community with the help and support of their Buddhist neighbours with *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* — self-reliance - as its core ingredient for five reasons.

First, *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* has not relied on the government's development schemes and programmes. Instead, it valued the diversity of all members as strengths in the community development process. *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* recognised that people offer significant abilities and responsibilities towards developing a sustainable community.

Second, *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* empowered Al-Mubarak Community members to take charge of developing their future. All events and activities taking part in the community came from the ideas and initiatives of the first and second generation. All major community organisations – the FEDMIN Foundation, Al-Mubarak Mosque, the STW School and the Mualaf Club, have been the master pieces of Al-Mubarak community members’ contribution to the Isan region. In addition, these have attracted the attention of their networks and partners across Thailand and other Muslim countries to support Al-Mubarak Community's development processes and practices at individual and organisational levels, through donations, funds, human capital and further development ideas.

Third, *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* enabled Muslims and Buddhist neighbours to come and work together as the villagers of Ban Nong Muean Thao village. Both faith communities have mobilised their human resources and vast opportunities for living together to create a solid foundation for a harmonious coexistence between the faith communities.

Fourth, *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* demonstrated that sustainable development for Al-Mubarak Community must begin with themselves. Self-reliance was the steppingstone for the future. Government agencies became part of this community development process after the community was settled and developed, by then promoting Al-Mubarak Community as best practice for pluralistic communities in Thailand. Many Muslim communities and government organisations from southern Thailand and Bangkok have now visited this community.

Fifth, the study pointed out the significant implication of *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* for community development is to allow all communities to develop self-reliance and self-confidence to pursue opportunities, so communities can grow and develop effectively. Consequently, the entire Thai society flourishes when healthy and sustainable communities are created.

9.1.5 Summary

This section concludes that the Thai concepts of *Watthanatham khwām ngīep* – the culture of silence, *Khaojai bōribot kām Ptisamphanth* – understanding the setting for daily interactions, and *Khwām cheūaman nai ton-ēng* – self-reliance, are important for understanding the dynamics of Al-Mubarak Community's development. They show that successful community development public policy and practice developed locally, with little connection to a formal legal framework and initial government support. Flexible engagement and active daily relationships between local people at the community level was essential to these community development achievements to date. It is suggested

that Thai faith and inter-faith communities can flourish with flexible local engagement and active participation of their members without recourse to a legal framework.

9. 2 Research Question 2: How does the Muslim community apply their faith values in the public policy environment of community development?

9.2.1 Introduction

This section combines findings and relevant literature to address the second research question – How can the Muslim Community apply their faith values in the public policy environment of community development. It frames the discussion under the overarching Thai constructs of *Pheūoenbān* – sense of neighbourhood with its three component features: *Khunkhā rūam* - Shared values, *Waineūacheūajai* – Trust and *Phønsawan* – Gifts.

9.2.2 Pheūoenbān – Sense of Neighbourhood

As a minority community, Muslims of Al-Mubarak Community have lived and worked alongside their majority Buddhist neighbours since the community's inception in 1995. Most participants stressed the concept of *Pheūoenbān* - neighbourhood *or* living together was now a very significant and routine feature in their daily lives. They gave many illustrative examples, including, learning from each other, sending their children to the same school (the Al-Mubarak's STW School), community exercise programs, together, and trading with each other. They also met on village streets, visit each other's homes, shared food and home-grown vegetables and conversed in Isan, the regional dialect, as well as Thai, the national language.

Muslim and Buddhist participants also acknowledged neighbourhood building had the full support of the Buddhist neighbours and this was crucial for Al-Mubarak community's future development. Most participants pointed out that opportunities for learning from each other formed a productive community building framework for both faith communities.

In contrast to Al-Mubarak community's strong sense of neighbourhood, the report, *Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine* (2017), showed many Muslim and Buddhist communities in Myanmar's Rakhine State, encountered formal state and local community barriers to interaction in their daily lives. They had no freedom of movement, a critical issue hindering community development and inter-communal harmony, and Muslim and Buddhist communities were fearful and anxious about the possibility of inter-community conflict and violence. At the same time, Myanmar authorities' intensified freedom of movement restrictions, reduced the scope for daily interaction and relationship building between Muslims and Buddhists. In stark contrast to the strong inter-community integration found in the Al-Mubarak case, the Myanmar government argued that the nation's stability and security depended on separation of the communities (The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017; Ware & Nyunt, 2017).

In Al-Mubarak Community, where Muslims and Buddhists have freedom of movement as equal Thai citizens, mutual relationships are harmonious and solid. My research also affirmed that Thai government authorities had never intervened in the relationship between these two faith communities, in this particular setting. Most participants stressed 'They are fully free' to move and interact in their communal lives without restrictions and barriers as promulgated in the Thai Constitution (The Royal Thai Government Gazette, 2017; Tonsakulrungruang, 2018). Many participants including Dawan, Fareeda and the Buddhist focus group noted that Muslims and Buddhists have also been living in peaceful harmony in many other areas in Thailand, unlike the deep south region of Thailand, or, in Myanmar's Rankine State, where simmering conflicts and violence are ongoing. Faith communities had coexisted for long periods in those regions, but the ongoing conflicts and tensions likely continue because of authoritarian interventions

(Jitpiromsri, 2017; The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017; Ware & Nyunt, 2017).

In the research findings, it is apparent that the vibrant neighbourhood building atmosphere in Al-Mubarak Community, underpins these faith communities' joint sustainable community development process, and empowers them to learn about and respect diversity of cultural/religious beliefs and practices. Muslim and Buddhist participants recognised both faith groups have a commonality, – a volunteer spirit, that has contributed to them feeling secure and comfortable to live together; they help others in need, combine on village issues, and share knowledge of community issues for the betterment of the community. This *Pheūoenbān* - sense of neighbourhood has become a defining integrating characteristic of the Al-Mubarak Community, where Muslims and Buddhist neighbours live and work together in ways that allow Muslim faith values to be professed fully in the daily life and ongoing development of their broader community. I will now discuss findings under the three key components of *Pheūoenbān*; *Khunkhā rūam* – shared values, *Waineūacheūajai* – trust, and *Phønsawan* – gifts.

9.2.2.1 *Khunkhā rūam* - Shared values

In many parts of the contemporary world Muslims face many social and political challenges that undermine constructive engagement with their wider society. Eid (2014) highlighted this in a Western context example, where minority Muslim communities are positioned as 'others' who should either be tolerated, or, expected to assimilate with their majority communities. Al-Mubarak Community's members never felt 'othered' in their wider community, nor were they seen in this light by their non-Muslim neighbours. On the contrary, many Buddhist participants including Dawan, Bua and Prathin, stressed that Muslims in Al-Mubarak Community were part of the village and active in village affairs. In addition, many of the Muslim wives were converts from Buddhism who shared extended Buddhist family kinship ties throughout Ban Nong Muean Thao Village. No

participants had ever seen conflict between the faith communities, even though they lived so close to each other.

Shared values and support provided a platform for incoming Muslim community members to live harmoniously in this developing community. Al-Mubarak Community's development would not have happened without the help and support from their non-Muslim neighbours, who were critical in its development in several ways.

Firstly, Muslims migrated to Ban Nong Muean Thao Village from different parts of Thailand and other countries too, and the Buddhist community welcomed and supported their settling into the village (See fuller details in Chapter 5). Many Buddhists neighbours sold land to Muslims to build the Al-Mubarak Community; land for their houses, the FEDMIN Foundation buildings, Al-Mubarak Mosque, the STW School and the Mualaf Club. Clearly, Muslims could have never built Al-Mubarak Community's physical infrastructure without the goodwill and support from their Buddhist neighbours.

Secondly, some Buddhist neighbours became guardians and active participants in the Al-Mubarak Community's development as teachers in the STW School, community aerobic class members, and via close daily social exchange as neighbours. Grandmother Learn's family provides an illustrative example. Her family grew up alongside the first Muslim generation, always defending and promoting their rights and opportunities in this village (See fuller detail in Chapter 5.6.1 Fostering Robust Relationships).

Thirdly, Al-Mubarak Community's development process, and its sustainability required Buddhist neighbours' involvement. For example, Buddhist neighbours were literally the builders of the FEDMIN Foundation, the Mosque, the Mualaf Club, the school, and Muslim homes in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. Muslims buy food, drinking water, goods, and other commodities from Buddhists - even a Thai massage service; Muslims are now privileged members and valuable clients of a famous Thai Buddhist massager

in the village. A mobile Buddhist ice cream seller does a weekly stop in front of Al-Mubarak Mosque for the children.

Fourthly, both Muslims and Buddhists must live together in this village, therefore, the equation for Al-Mubarak Community's development process is to sustain and flourish the *Khunkhā rūam* - shared values, between both faith communities.

The above findings are consistent with the views of Ramadan (2017), Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford, on the defining Islamic perspective of the Muslim Community. He argues that the Muslim community, or *Ummah* (Arabic), is a community of shared principles, which may be more significant than the Muslims themselves. Such neighbourhood communities trace back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessing be Upon Him - PBUH), who also considered the Jewish community as members of the *Ummah* he founded, fulfilling the same community duties, and enjoying the same rights as Muslims (Ramadan, 2001, 2007, 2017).

Further, Abdel Haleem (2016) pointed out in his classic book - The Qur'an: A new translation, that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), at that time, made a shared solidarity pact between the immigrants – *Muhajirin* (Arabic), and the Muslims of Medina known as the helpers – *Ansar* (Arabic). In the meantime, Muhammad (PBUH), also made a more significant contract between all tribes of Medina that they would fully support one another in protecting the city against attack. Each tribe would be equal under this covenant, including the Jews, and free to practice their religions and beliefs (Abdel Haleem, 2016; Ramadan, 2007, 2017). Hence, this community was to be a community of shared values forbidding self-isolation and non-participation in activities, whether as minority groups, or majority Muslims (Ramadan, 2001, 2007, 2017).

This study also displays the *Khunkhā rūam* or shared values that the Al-Mubarak community had built on in their community's development such as fostering robust relationships with love and compassion, acknowledging community diversity (see fuller

detail in Chapter 5.6.1 Fostering Robust Relationships), and working for the sake of wider society, (referred to Chapter 8.1.4 Sharing Good Contributions for the Sake of the Broader Society). Similarly, Buddhist neighbours had welcomed Muslims to their village, and joined Muslim activities and events at the mosque, the foundation and the school, respected Muslim identities and their potential, and listened to each other's issues of concern (Hussain, 2012; Eid 2014). Therefore, Khadijah commented, Muslims were to never think that they, Muslims, are better than others and do not ever think that Muslims are more prosperous than our neighbours. Whatever they do, would ultimately help sustain the shared community and village.

In Al-Mubarak Community, minority Muslims and majority Buddhists have worked and lived together, willing to work crossing their faith boundaries and understanding each other. On the other hand, Ware and Clarke (2016) have argued that working across faith boundaries is sometimes very difficult, requiring caution, as faiths or religions have a dark side to justify exclusions between minority and majority and trigger ethnic and political tensions. Durrant and Poppelwell (2017) have examined the dark sides of religions that promote or facilitate prejudice, various forms of inter-group conflicts, and wars. Mohan (2019) concluded that religion can redefine morality and ethics giving extremists a pretext for religiously acceptable violence. A sense of religious superiority, or, religious imperialism, can lead to interreligious tension and violence, as evidenced by sectarian violence between Hindus and Muslims in India (Mohan, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2019).

In the context of South-East Asian Countries, Liow (2016), the author of "Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia," examined the relationship between religion and the role of the state in majority Muslim countries - Indonesia and Malaysia, and in minority ones – Southern Thailand, and Southern Philippines. He argued that religion was a prominent factor in the political process with debate over who is eligible for being part of nation building. It also connects to historical legacies of colonisation, nationalism,

democratisation, and separatism, e.g., the Rohingya people in Myanmar. These case studies demonstrated that when states opted for force, conflict and violent situations developed. In the meantime, the communities attempted to defend themselves and negotiate with the states over rights' narratives, and inter-, or (in) dependence (Liow, 2016; The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017).

It is clear that in Al-Mubarak Community neither minority Muslims, nor majority Buddhists ever used their religion or faith to claim superiority. Historically, the Ban Nong Muean Thao communities have also never experienced the socio-political conflicts and nationalism, separatism issues that neighbouring countries in the region or Southern Thailand have suffered.

The research findings discovered that Muslim and Buddhist community leaders have long worked together to help build Al-Mubarak Community and constructively shared community development ideas. Muslims and Buddhists have often been interdependent on social and economic relationships, for instance, the initial interdependency created by early Muslim settlers needing to buy land for their homes and buildings and the economic benefits that brought to the existing Buddhist "land-seller" and construction worker community. They daily interact and trade goods, perspectives of development, supporting job creation among them. They both benefitted from each other.

The study of Liow (2016) mentioned in some cases in southern Thailand – Malay Muslims or in southern Philippines – Bangsamoro Muslims were not considered equal to other people in the same nation. In contradiction, The Muslims of the Al-Mubarak Community never felt they were othered, or, had tensions with the state or the Royal Thai government. They felt secure belonging to the same community, considered "Khon Isan", like their Buddhist neighbours.

Similar, to the *Ummah* that Abdel Haleem (2016) and Ramadan (2007, 2017) explained, Muslims and Buddhists in the Al-Mubarak Community have lived together in the same neighbourhood setting without any "social written construct" as the Muslim community,

and Jewish communities in Medina had committed to live together. As members of the same community, “Al-Mubarak neighbourhood”, Muslims and Buddhists continue to build another shared value - a shared future in this neighbourhood as well.

At the community level, the concept of *Khunkhā rūam* - Shared values - among Muslims and Buddhists in Al-Mubarak Community is not just merely sharing resources, but also, they have shared the same values - the same extended families and the same Isan local setting and never felt to be the “othered” among neighbours even when they admitted the different faiths of each other. The study, therefore, demonstrated the daily informal and formal interactions in the same community through home contacts, the school, shops, markets, a foundation, a mosque, a temple, and community meeting places and a community hall are crucial factors that people have recognised that could flourish *Khunkhā rūam* - Shared values among themselves.

This research study showed the robust relationship between Muslims and Buddhists was a crucial foundation to support and improve the process of Al-Mubarak neighbourhood building. The five essential features that I consider underpinned this robust relationship are discussed below:

First, Al-Mubarak Community, was instigated by two outstanding Muslim leaders - Kru Haroon and Dr Preeda. Both were visionary leaders with powerful personalities who engaged inclusively with all, Muslim and Non-Muslim in the community. Kru Haroon had a simple and warmest personality. Many Buddhist neighbours still recall him with much respect and his smiling, greetings, and helping others regardless of faith and religion.

Likewise, Dr Preeda used his vision and academic skill and experience to design a long-time framework for that robust relationship. The STW School became a neutral space where people of different faiths feel secure and comfortable dealing with the Muslim community. The STW School had provided immense opportunities to engage with the Muslim community. Many non-Muslims felt that they were not ready yet to join the Muslim Community through its mosque because they thought it was a sacred place of worship

where they were not comfortable visiting daily. Instead, they daily sent their children into the school; they felt more comfortable visiting the school than the Mosque and built their social, community relationships there.

Second, the convert Muslims – all women- have been the crucial players in effectively building robust relationships in the village. All these converts, married to Muslim men, are also sisters, aunties, cousins, and daughters of the neighbouring Buddhist families in the village and the province. They are part of Buddhist extended families, not a separate group of strangers who have come in from somewhere else. Culturally, convert Muslims provided the connection for incoming Muslim migrants to the local culture, language, and traditions, and a bridge to other Buddhists who wanted to know about Muslims. They are crucial connectors and bridges who underpinned the development the mutual trust and understanding between the two cultures and faiths and are key to its ongoing sustainability.

Third, an open opportunity is provided by Buddhist neighbours. It has been a key factor to maintain a robust relationship with Muslim neighbours. The findings explicitly stated that Buddhist participants have been willing to engage with their Muslim friends fully. Since the beginning of the Al-Mubarak Community settlement, Buddhists have thoroughly supported all activities and events taking place in Al-Mubarak Community. Economically, the Buddhist community likewise benefited from very early on, and ongoing, by selling land to the new Muslim community and again by literally building their houses and other buildings – the foundation, the mosque, the school, and the Mualaf Club. Many Buddhists have received jobs and employment by working with their Muslim neighbours. Most importantly, the study indicated that the Muslim community was never seen as an economic cost, competitor, rival, or enemy, but as friends, neighbours, and employers.

Fourth, the productive role of Buddhist teachers in the STW School has been recognised as a 'gateway' that embraced their Buddhist parents and people to join and engage with

the Muslim community at the first stage. The study stated that those Buddhist teachers had tried to convince and persuade Buddhist parents, who had a misunderstanding that the school would brainwash their children to be Muslims, that this school is nothing but a neutral place for children of all faiths to play, learn and work together. The majority of the STW School teachers are Buddhists and there are very few Muslim teachers, and even students. The school itself has provided an invaluable opportunity for all its teachers and students comprised of Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians to live and learn from one another. The school has endeavoured to promote and improve the best and qualified education for all students equally. The STW School and its Buddhist teachers have become a vital factor that has paved the mutual understanding among Muslims and non-Muslims on the ground significantly. Most importantly, the works of the school will become a concrete and powerful mechanism to sustain and improve the robust relationship in the community for the future.

Fifth, the Udon Thani Muslim Football club and the aerobic community class have become incredible instruments for improving and sustaining the robust relationship. Both sports have played a key role in embracing Muslim and Buddhist adults and the younger generation to be together. The research study showed that these two sports were built by Muslim and Buddhist members. The adults had gathered in the evening to exercise, and the younger generation played football together at weekends. The sports made them familiar with each other – talking, eating, playing together in informal interaction - It is a crucial factor that helps and supports the robust relationship among them.

9.2.2.2 *Waineūacheūajai – Trust*

Al-Mubarak's Muslims are immersed in Islamic principles in their daily lives through the Islamic classroom, the *Khutbah* sermon at communal Friday congregation and religious self-educational endeavours in the community – the mosque, the school, the FEDMIN and the Mualaf club. Besides religious topics such as how to know God, the knowledge of the Noble Qur'an, the biography of the prophets, the five pillars of Islam and the six

pillars of faiths, - the significance of trust in community neighbourhood building is now a major focus for Muslims in Al-Mubarak Community in their daily prayers and on other occasions.

The Chapter 6 findings showed that the Imam, the Khateeb and elders (men and women) in the community have become essential instructors preaching the principles of Islam to their Muslim community about behaving towards their neighbours in an exemplary manner. Most participants believed that their faith provided them with a framework for human relationship so that they could somehow use it for good.

Waineūacheūajai - trust - has been the fundamental core of the neighbourhood within Muslims and between Muslims and Buddhists. It is seen as at the core of the solid long-term relationship that both sides have built up through generations – from the first generation, Kru Haroon, Preeda, Aminah and Khadijah, on to the current generation – through the football club, aerobics' class, volunteering activities and the STW School. Many Buddhist participants recognised the first generation Muslim leaders, particularly Kru Haroon, as critical in building both the Al-Mubarak Community and the broader community relationship

Most participants, Muslims and Buddhists acknowledged that Kru Haroon laid a solid foundation of mutual trust and relationship-building in Ban Nong Muean Thao village. Many Buddhist participants mentioned his personality "He was very friendly and modest. He liked to smile and always greeted people along the street." Preeda, initial president of FEDMIN Foundation, made a more intellectual contribution, promoting the STW School, from the outset, as a school for children of all faiths. This vision has been so successful, that non-Muslim pupils are the majority of the school roll. Participants agreed that the school is a neutral and constructive relationship-building space, where Muslims, Buddhists and other faith pupils play, learn and eat together with a mixed Buddhist, Muslim and Christian teaching team.

The STW School aspires to be a role model on multiculturalism policy matters in the Isan region and Thailand while encouraging its students to become intellectual, smart and responsive citizens of the world. Several Muslim women like Fareeda, Preeda, Jamilah and Ismail noted that the school was a neutral space for trust, a comfortable area for non-Muslims first engagement with the Muslim community. Some Buddhist parents felt more secure interacting there, than visiting the Al-Mubarak Mosque. They trusted the school.

The Buddhist convert wives of Muslim men have been crucial contributors to building the bridge for a community of trust, not only in this village community, but also in other communities in Udon Thani and the Isan region. They have been the main teachers of the regional Isan language and local cultural and social histories to their Muslim families. This has supported harmonious integrated community relationships as family living side by side, in contrast to examples of inter-religious conflict between very distinctly different groups.

The two faith communities have developed – *Waineūacheūajai* – trust - from a positive relationship based on shared personal/social/kinship values as well as respect for religious diversity. The faith communities were never “separate” at the daily community interaction level.

9.2.2.3 Phønsawan - Gifts

Whether Muslims or Buddhists, all participants have built their community out of what they had and what they have known before. They built this community consistently with their individual gifts to the process, as understood within the Thai concept of *Phønsawan*: the diversity of community members' skills, expertise, capacities, and capabilities were their gifts, contributions to the process.

Thriving Communities (2018) identifies gifts are the core perspectives that can enable their neighbourhood building process and practice. Al-Mubarak Community as a neighbourhood believes that all members have gifts to share and contribute to their own

community. Building a solid neighbourhood, therefore, becomes a matter of everybody contributing their gifts, talents, capacities as much as possible to each other and the whole neighbourhood.

This practice and concept of gifting echoes the research in my literature review. McKnight and Russell (2018) argued that gifts are innate; people are born with them. Therefore, every person can contribute their gifts to their community to make a better way in building a solid neighbourhood (McKnight & Block, 2010).

People are at the heart of Al-Mubarak Community's development processes and practices. The directions for the community development depend on all members – all people of Al-Mubarak have *Phønsawan* to offer for good things in the neighbourhood. In the Findings' chapters, many participants including Imam Shafei, Fatimah, Khadijah and Fareeda, recognised that *Phønsawan* had become an essential element of the community's progress.

Viney (2016) analysed the importance of gifts in a Christian community and indicated that people bring gifts that work together on a community journey for three reasons. First, people are concerned about balancing their community because a community naturally tends to have ups and downs. Second, a community is a great place where people learn, grow, and give. Third, community relationships can also encourage people to reflect on how they act in daily interaction.

The Findings' chapters identified that the "People of Al-Mubarak" had *Phønsawan* - extensive gifts, to offer for sustaining their neighbourhood. These gifts include cooking, carpentry, car repair, health remedies, gardening, football, community organising, sawing, accounting, Qur'anic teaching, English teaching, cleaning, computing, house building, trading skills, humanitarian skills, public volunteering, driving, rice planting, community networking, massaging, video making, wedding organising, electrical skills, language skills, funeral organising, baking, fundraising and relationship making. These kinds of *Phønsawan* have become the constructive mechanisms that all participants and

people in Al-Mubarak Community have shared in building their neighbourhood among people of different faiths. The gifts of the people in Al-Mubarak Community can be divided into three categories.

First, 'Gifts of the Mind' refers to what people care deeply about, their hopes, values, intentions, inspirations, dreams - how they have tried to keep these qualities alive in their community development processes and practices. The Findings' chapters have shown that all participants have thought deeply about their future and the future of the next generation, to ensure this community can be sustained as a safe and better place for all faiths.

Second, 'Gifts of the Means' engages with what instruments community members have been utilising as they share their skills, abilities, experiences, and expertise with others. People have actively and intentionally settled in Ban Nong Muean Thao village for the purpose of building a Muslim community where Muslims and non-Muslims can live together as neighbours. The research findings had demonstrated that Muslims must adopt, live, and work with others to sustain the Al-Mubarak Community. Therefore, the 'Gifts of the Means' require mutual interactions, robust relationships, and mutual collaboration among neighbours in their daily lives.

Third, 'Gifts of the Mission' involves things people understand, know, and would talk about or share with others, particularly their younger generation. These gifts are about how to cook, live with others, communicate with others, keep their values and identities, focus on the gifts of the first generation - making good relationships with neighbours, and spreading the dreams and intentions of the forebears to the next generation. However, the 'Gifts of the Mission' demands advocacy and support from all ages to deal with the changing community contexts – e.g., how to embrace the incoming members, and how to deal with the onslaught of urbanisation.

9.2.2.3.1 The implications of *Phønsawan* - Gifts

Based on all Findings' chapters and my observations, I discovered seven significant implications of *Phønsawan* - gifting - that has supported building a solid neighbourhood among Muslims and Buddhists in Ban Nong Muean Thao Village. It can help to create paid employment in the community. Some residents have skills such as cooking, baking, electrical skills, for instance. These skills can also be transferred with training for others to create employment.

The community has realised that all members have to take creative responsibility for their community, families, and lives. People are capable of making their community a safer, healthier, better place to enable all of them to be part of this community building. They can begin with working together with others in many areas where they feel comfortable and safe – e.g., education, economics, social security. People can utilise gifts from others to nurture their families, children, and community. However, they must also connect with others to support them, and extend their gifts as community assets and wisdom that belong to everybody.

People should understand the limits of funds and money donated from outside the community. Since the outset of Al-Mubarak Community, a lot of donors and support - from organisations, groups, individuals, and relatives, have continued to help the process of Al-Mubarak Community's settlement and development through all its organisations and personal connections. The community must realise that they cannot rely merely on those domestic and international donors and support anymore. They need to create new ideas and initiatives with their gifts to take care of their community and neighbours. They must use their gifts to deal with many issues of concern – advancing education for children, restoring Al-Mubarak Mosque, preserving trees and forest, nourishing people in need of food and assistance, particularly the poor people in the community.

People can share their gifts to build a future together, whether Muslims and Buddhists. For them, gifts are valuable exchanges that can be applied in their lives to create a

shared future. People can use their gifts to find constructive ways to nurture and sustain their neighbourhood within a new context of living together. People can perceive that their gifts are powerful to make a positive difference in their neighbourhood building. In doing this, people have to believe in their gifts and capacities and try hard to maintain their gifts by creating systems or mechanisms to help and empower these exchanges. Al-Mubarak community can be a role model for other Muslim communities in the Isan region where Muslims and non-Muslims can join and create a mutual collaboration in working together as a neighbourhood and partners in development.

The community has many spectacular stories that can create and improve their gifts – e.g., the stories of the early days of Kru Haroon and Dr Preeda, the two prominent founding fathers. They laid a strong foundation of a robust relationship between Muslims and Buddhists before the expansion of the Al-Mubarak Community. New and old generations should recognise and pass on their forefathers' stories – How did they connect with others, inspire others to join in this community spiritual and physical journey, and how did Buddhist leaders and villagers respond to the first Muslim generation. Such historical stories can illuminate and illustrate the big picture for a lasting relationship in this neighbourhood.

Gifts can also be a connecting space where people can engage and learn from each other - how to learn positive and negative things from one another and make suitable choices for their own journey. People's gifts can provide a good opportunity for all community members to write their own stories and legacies and share them with others within their own neighbourhood. All members can learn from their own way in their neighbourhood setting. Consequently, *Muslims and Buddhists have many Phønsawan – gifts-* to share as constructive nurturing mechanisms for building a solid neighbourhood together.

9.2.3 Summary

This section concludes that Al-Mubarak Community's members have applied their understanding of faith values in a Thai concept of *Pheūoenbān* – a sense of neighbourhood comprised of three concepts: *Khunkhā rūam* - Shared values, *Waineūacheūajai* – Trust and *Phønsawan* – Gifts. These Thai concepts represented space and opportunity for people of Al-Mubarak Community to work and share their values in a new defining environment of a neighbourhood where Muslims and Buddhists were described as members.

Al-Mubarak Community as a solid neighbourhood has shown that people had a wider space and vast possibilities to interact and learn from each other in the same setting without any barriers and obstructions. They have felt free and comfortable living and learning from each other since the community began. Such a journey of making the “Al-Mubarak Neighbourhood” has not been easy. Both Muslims and Buddhists have learned from each other during the community development process and practice from the first generation and the new generations of both sides.

People could only apply their faith values and share them with each other. Faith values can be applied through activities and daily interaction as equal neighbours. Most importantly, Muslims and Buddhists must trust each other to make sure that they have a shared future together. They also have to open their space for embracing each other. Such a solid neighbourhood like Al-Mubarak Neighbourhood, sharing gifts, creating a shared future, and making intimacy has become constructive mechanisms for bringing people of different faiths together.

9.3 Research Question 3: What are the challenges and opportunities for using faith values in community development in the Udon Thani province?

9.3.1 Introduction

This section integrates research findings and relevant literature review relating to the third research question – What are the challenges and opportunities for using faith values in community development in Udon Thani province. It focuses texturally on Al-Mubarak Community, where Muslim and Buddhist participants live, work, and interact together in the research area. I discuss the challenges and opportunities all participants of Al-Mubarak Community have been facing from their perspectives on using faith values in community development for Al-Mubarak Community. I use the Thai constructs of *Phūseūpthət* – The successors, *Panhā Singwaētləm* - Environmental issues, *Pheūnthi poēt samrap phūying* - An open space for women and *Dunlayaphāp* – A balanced approach for development, for local cultural context in this section. This section comprises two parts – the challenges and opportunities.

9.3.2 The challenges

9.3.2.1 *Phūseūpthət* – The successors

One of the most critical challenges facing Al-Mubarak Community now is the transition of the tasks and missions of Al-Mubarak Community's development from the first Muslim generation to the next ones – how can they sustain Al-Mubarak Community into the future? Findings' chapters show the community worried about their *Phūseūpthət* or successors, those who will inherit what has been done and achieved by the first-generation settlers, who established and developed Al-Mubarak Community. This research embracing three generations, uncovered a 'successor' narrative, especially from the first-generation settlers.

In a mirror of the literature reviewed, participants saw that the significant challenges for community development were to focus on the abilities of the future generation (The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) and to attract the younger generation to participate and to think about sustainable community development (Baker,2016; Chile,2007; Vasoo,2001). Al-Mubarak Community's first generation saw the younger generation had essential roles relevant to the future of Al-Mubarak Community's development. Therefore, the Thai concept of *Phūseūpthət* has become a critical issue for those who currently have responsibility for their own community. Most participants were concerned about the capabilities and awareness of their younger generation – the second and the third generations, in maintaining and sustaining Al-Mubarak Community.

Phūseūpthət was a central core of the intergenerational management transition for Al-Mubarak Community, as well as the intergenerational transmission of their history and faith values. *Phūseūpthət* has nine significant characteristics for Al-Mubarak Community's development.

1. Most first generation participants understood that Al-Mubarak Community was developed as an intentional community. Some of the second and third generations do not have this experience: they were born locally into the established community. To date only a few have been involved in the process of community development. They need time to be trained and nurtured to understand the history, vision and acquire the skills for future leadership.
2. Some of the first-generation members were concerned about the development direction for Al-Mubarak Community. They had devoted themselves to building this community for all ages and were relooking for *Phūseūpthət* - the successors to continue to do the same thing as they did - e.g., constructing and maintaining community infrastructure - the foundation, the school, the mosque etc.

3. Some older participants saw a generation gap between the age groups in the community, and saw the *Phūseūpthət*, the successors, living in a different world due to different education, mobility, work opportunities etc. They saw understanding and respect for the potential and different perspectives on community development among all generations would be critical.
4. Participants from the second and the third generations recognised what the first generation has done for the community development, the successes or failures. At the same time, the second and the third generations were creating their own ways to develop and sustain this community. In a focus group for the Football Club, I realised that this group of young men intended to nurture their community and understood and aspired to development roles for them in of Al-Mubarak Community. They were awaiting their turn as *Phūseūpthət* or the successors to take care of their beloved community and society.
5. Intergenerational transitions for Al-Mubarak Community means all ages need to sit and talk about their future more than before. Al-Mubarak community development continuity needs a deliberate succession plan and process, which involves all generations as its members.
6. *Phūseūpthət*, the successors, might have different thoughts about their community positive and negative, and its future. Therefore, the people of Al-Mubarak will be taking risks with their choices, as each generation might think and act differently about the future.
7. Al-Mubarak Community's sustainable community development is in the hands of the new generation. They have to commit to take care of this community and demonstrate that they can sustain this community and make positive changes for their community. In the meantime, the participation of all generations in sustaining this community's development is critically important, and processes and practices must be put in place to achieve this.

8. For transition plans and processes, Al-Mubarak Community must also engage with their Buddhist neighbours, who have always been willing to help and give advice. The neighbours' concerns and perspectives on the affairs of the Al-Mubarak Community have been significant and crucial for the process of Al-Mubarak Community's development from the very beginning. The Buddhist neighbours have shown they are also concerned and invested in the future of the Al-Mubarak Community for the benefit of the entire community and the wider society in Udon Thani province and the Isan region.
9. *Phūseūpthət* are not only the second and third generations, but newcomers as well, who have recently joined and now participate in the affairs of the community. Newcomers have been engaged and enthusiastic about the activities and events held in the community, particularly in Al-Mubarak Mosque and the Mualaf Club. As discussed, *Phūseūpthət* or the successors of Al-Mubarak Community must include all people willing to sustain and make this community a suitable place for all members, regardless of background and faith affiliation.

These nine significant characteristics for Al-Mubarak Community's sustainable development show the people of Al-Mubarak must take risks and believe in their new generations and new ideas. The intergenerational transition of the Al-Mubarak community is the responsibility of all members.

9.3.2.2 *Panhā Singwaētləm* - Environmental issues

Environmental issues such as air pollution, climate change, noise, severe floods, forest conservation, waste, and wastewater management were identified in Findings chapter 8 as pressing serious issues and challenges to the sustainable development of Al-Mubarak Community.

Most participants discussed *Panhā Singwaētləm* or the environmental issues that affected their daily lives and felt the growing high temperatures and severe floods and droughts were affecting their growing seasons and productivity. I was surprised at how

many participants raised awareness and concerns, and that they felt that *Panhā Singwaētløm* was an issue beyond their abilities to deal with, beyond local citizen participation.

In the literature review, citizen participation in sustainable development at the community level was critical (Howard & Wheeler, 2015). Sustainable community development needed to be understood and the SDGs needed a bottom-up policy approach with the involvement and engagement of civil societies (Chambers, 2014, 2017; Green, 2012).

In the case of sustainable development for Al-Mubarak Community, people were just concerned to increase their productivity and receive resources from some compensation schemes provided by the government. Most participants did not know about the SDGs or even about Thai government agencies' activities on climate change. Regardless, people had tried to deal with floods and droughts. They certainly understood there had been major changes in weather patterns.

Chapter eight findings have shown that *Panhā Singwaētløm* has become an increasingly critical issue that needed everyone's daily involvement. People admitted living in a rural area like Ban Nong Muean Thao village was not easy. For many more recent residents, they had not encountered such environmental dilemmas before.

Based on the understanding of the data analysis and my observations I found that even though people have talked and raised *Panhā Singwaētløm* in their community and the village, there are five challenges for Al-Mubarak Community and their village to act on *Panhā Singwaētløm*.

1. In general, *Panhā Singwaētløm* is now a critical global issue (Sidibé, 2016), with high level attempts at solutions (UN, 2015). At the local level my research participants had experienced climate variability impacts on their paddy fields and productivity, plus factories increasingly leaking chemicals into their fields. Some also complained about the excessive noise during the night-time. There was

little collective action from the community or the village to make plans for confronting *Panhā Singwaētløm*, and any formal engagement with local government and local industries had been unproductive, to date.

2. The STW School and Al-Mubarak Mosque have tried hard to persuade and encourage their students and members to think about better management of waste and plastics in the community. These campaigns need collective ambition and collective action by people of all ages and faiths in the community. Consequently, community sustainability is ambitious, but critical.
3. The community felt at a crossroads facing the onslaught of urbanisation – e.g., the expansion of the Udon Thani Industrial Estate, with increased community roads, and the close proximity of Mittraphap Rd, the primary national highway from Bangkok through the Isan region. Many people see this urbanisation will affect and change their daily lives forever. Now, they have floods in the village and the community partly because the Honda Motor Company built a barrier that disrupted natural waterflows so that rainwater now produces severe flooding flowing from higher ground to the lower levels of the community residential areas and the Mosque. The lands for planting and paddy fields are losing soil and crops. On the other hand, many people see that this factory as a massive opportunity for the villagers to get more employment from the growth of urbanisation, with potential benefits from more newcomers and new settlers and children for the village and school. Many participants indicated the community could not ignore this change, but it must be ready to challenge such outcomes in the future.
4. The environmental issue is very new at the organisation level for all community organisations – the FEDMIN Foundation, Al-Mubarak Mosque, the Mualaf Club, and the STW School. Those organisations had started to deal with *Panhā Singwaētløm*, and the school and the mosque have taken the lead, promising to develop and improve their agendas, organisational structures, and activities towards *Panhā Singwaētløm*. The bigger challenge is to implement this

awareness among people of all faiths and all members of all community organisations.

5. *Panhā Singwaētløm* can draw on Islamic, Buddhist, and other faith communities.

All people, regardless of faith affiliation, have steadily become the victims of the climate crisis, the depletion and degradation of the natural environment. In the case of Al-Mubarak Community, all FBOs can promote and enhance the teaching of faith values on environmental issues for their members and followers through faith mechanisms such as sermons, religious classes, and active engagement in community clean-up activities.

Environmental issues facing this community have become a new challenge for Muslims and Buddhists to expand opportunities for multi-faith, intergenerational collective actions focused on environmental health. Sustainable community development is no longer a global and national agenda removed from daily local life.

9.3.3 The Opportunities

9.3.3.1 *Pheūnthī poēt samrap phūying - An open space for women*

All the Findings' chapters, particularly chapter six, suggest that Al-Mubarak Community had been a progressive Muslim community from the outset with active space for women in the entire process of community development. This feature is a very special feature of Al-Mubarak Community, given very restricted roles for women in more traditional Muslim communities.

All Al-Mubarak organisations, had provided enabling atmospheres for women's participation and engagement in all aspects of the community's development with vital roles in the process. There are three possible reasons why women had the freedom to engage fully and play key roles in of Al-Mubarak Community's development.

1. One contributor is that the founding leaders of Al-Mubarak Community, Kru Haroon and Dr Preeda, were progressive leaders who recognised and promoted women's roles in the community's development process in contrast to more restricted opportunities for women in more traditional Muslim communities. Their views, very progressive compared to conservative Muslim leaders from majority Muslim communities, may be partly due to their individual social backgrounds and personalities.
2. However, another reason is more pragmatic and less noble; community membership was very small initially and all available persons were needed to shoulder leadership and development roles, regardless of gender—there was no other option.
3. A third and very major consideration is that, rather than the women being “enabled”, or, invited to step into the leadership and major community engagement spaces, occupied them naturally on their own initiative. All the Muslim convert women had very different prior social, gender role experiences and upbringing in their Buddhist families and communities (See fuller detail in chapter 6).

9.3.3.2 *Dunlayaphāp* – A balanced approach for development

Al-Mubarak Community has played a vital role in bringing people together across the village with faith values at the centre of development for sustainability. *Dunlayaphāp* for sustainable community development for Al-Mubarak Community is a crucial opportunity to move this community forward.

The findings' chapters recognised that many participants desired *Dunlayaphāp*, a balanced approach for their sustainable community development. It indicated that Al-Mubarak Community had to balance spirituality and materialism in its ways to development. The literature review affirmed that a balanced approach to social, ecological, and economic dimensions of life for people living in all corners of society was

the core substance of sustainable community development (Howard & Wheeler, 2015; Sidibé, 2016).

The study acknowledged this balanced approach for participants, but spirituality needs to be a central dimension of sustainable community development. *Dunlayaphāp* needs the spiritual dimension at the heart of other dimensions – social, economic, political, and environmental. Al-Mubarak Community showed that while participants never ignored the material life, they recognised that the spiritual aspect of life could make this community sustainable and growing.

The *Dunlayaphāp* approach for Al-Mubarak Community's development has played a powerful practical role in helping and supporting people in need of food, and comfortable overnight stays for visitors, travellers, and a safe and welcoming new home for refugees. Many participants wanted to maintain their balanced life by improving the community into a better place for all people, regardless of their socio-economic status.

The *Dunlayaphāp* approach can drive the helpers to reach out to needy people in the community development process and practice. Balanced community development provides opportunities for embracing people in need, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised people in the broader society.

Pheūnthī poēt samrap phūying and *Dunlayaphāp* have been recognised to play a vital role in the opportunities for respecting and embracing the community and neighbourhood. These opportunities for using faith values in community development continue and connect with people participating in all steps of community development.

9.3.4 Summary

The section concludes that the challenges and the opportunities for using faith values in the community development in Al-Mubarak Community. The Al-Mubarak Community's development balances risks and appreciation all the time. Using faith values embraces the possibility that people may think of different ways to improve their community

development. These different opinions and perspectives of the community members are the vast opportunities for lifting the community forwards sustainably.

Therefore, Al-Mubarak Community cannot drive into the future without the full participation of all its members, whether they are women, men, young, old, rich and poor. Their full participation and engagement have inevitably become the heart of effective sustainable community development. The case of Al-Mubarak Community showed that sustainable development means sustainable community development where people in the community are the key factor of development.

9.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The major future research recommendation and intention is to complete the Action Planning, Implementation and Evaluation phases of the original proposed research plan, unavoidably truncated because of the COVID-19 pandemic. A wealth of community data has now been collected to be used as the basis of these next steps for collaborative decision-making on community action priorities and community strategies for engaging with specific issues facing the community. There is will and solidarity in the community for this. A range of further policy and practice research recommendations are likely to arise from this for engagements within the community and with community stakeholders and local government.

Future research should also focus on future women's leadership and engagement roles in Muslim community development, and faith and inter-faith relationships in developing and sustaining *Pheūoenbān* - a sense of neighbourhood. The concept of *Pheūoenbān*, sharing and caring, should be essential to Thailand's development policy and practice socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. The notable strength of Muslim women's role and place in Al-Mubarak Community is an unusual, even unique, finding from this research in terms of other Muslim Thai and international communities and deserves future research focus for that reason. In addition, future research into how

such a level of women's leadership developed in this religious minority community within the broader context of Thailand's highly gendered social, and patriarchal/militaristic governance contexts should have critical implications for future sustainable community policy development.

9.5 Contributions to the research field

This research presents the study of Al-Mubarak Community as a successful, intentional minority Muslim community in a Buddhist majority village setting applying their faith values at the core of their community's development. Key features contributing to this successful journey, appear to be early leadership and planning, significant roles for women, and especially the role intermarriage between the communities has played in creating the harmonious inter-faith relationship. The development dynamics of this community are a useful exemplar for other communities.

A further contribution is the use of local, Thai, cultural constructs as lens into fuller understanding of the findings, e.g., role of silence in Thai social interaction and its influence on academic inquiry in this project. These provide culturally rich context for appreciating local social interactions and community development complexities beyond those available from western perspectives and concepts.

Given global, regional and national Islamophobia and religious tensions, this study shows a positive faith-based model can promote understanding and creation of sustainable inter-faith community living.

9.6 Limitations to the study

As referred to earlier, the major limitation was the inability to complete the full research plan due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further limitations include, I had only two interviews with young adult third Muslim generation. I did not interview any teenage girls, nor were they participants in the

women's focus group. During my fieldwork, most were unavailable, were studying in Bangkok, or, working in other big cities throughout the Isan region. While I accessed young men via the Football Club, including more younger voices, especially girls, must be a priority in the next two PAR stages.

My initial focus was on Muslim participants. However, after a pilot survey, I realised I required the views and perspectives of Buddhist neighbours living side by side with the Muslims in Al-Mubarak Community. This demonstrates my initial limited perspective and my academic and personal growth needed for the rest of this research journey. I did not include Buddhist community members in the transect walks. They demonstrated they had a lot of knowledge on climate change and environmental challenges, in the focus group and community meetings, underscoring the need for me to become much more inclusive.

9.7 Final remarks

“The more I learn; the more I learn of my ignorance.”

(Imām Shāfiʿī, 769-820 AD)

When I was young, my father instructed me each day to lead a flock of goats and cows to pastureland and coconut plants in my hometown. I was born a Muslim country boy in a tiny Muslim village surrounded by many Buddhist communities. In the morning, I had to walk to a Buddhist temple school where I pursued my general education with mostly Buddhist classmates. In the evening, I had to walk to the community mosque to follow the Islamic faith and principles. I had to live up to the principles of both religious worlds.

I have been a development practitioner for many years, visiting sites and listening to people tell their stories about their lives. These became my questions with respect to my research agenda. In this thesis I was still learning to be a development researcher, and listening to the community experts, learning more than I had ever known about a community I had been actively involved in for over 20 years.

When my father guided me, he would say, "Imron, look after your goats carefully and try to listen to the voices of your goats while grazing. One day, your goats will look after your journey to understand the world." I realised that If I wanted to be a successful qualitative researcher on development policy and practice, there is only one way to do this, to "Listen". Listen and then you will understand people around you.

God Almighty knows best.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ATEC APPROVAL



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMĀKĀI MĀKAU RAU

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC)

Auckland University of Technology
 D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
 T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
 E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

8 July 2019

Marilyn Waring
 Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Marilyn

Re Ethics Application: **18/428 How faith matters: Al-Mubarak Muslim Community development for sustainable development: A case study from Udon Thani Province of Isan Region of Thailand**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 5 July 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

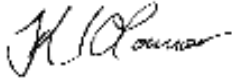
1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation, then you are responsible for obtaining it. If the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all locality legal and ethical obligations and requirements. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,



Kate O'Connor
 Executive Manager
 Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Imron Sabhan; Love Chile; johnsim@khu.ac.th

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

(Discussion questions for focus groups)

1. What do you think of when you think about the word 'community'?
2. What communities can you think of that you belong to?
3. What do you think are the characteristics, which hold a community together?
4. What does a sense of belonging to a community mean to you?
5. Is having a sense of belonging to a community group is important to your well-being?
6. What kinds of activities are they involved in?
7. Which do you like the most? Why is that?
8. What have you felt proud to achieve in your work for your communities?
9. Have you heard the words 'community development?' what does this mean to you?
10. How about the words sustainable environment? What does sustainable environment mean in our community right here?
11. What is the availability, supply and quality of the water in the community?
12. How is wastewater managed, especially in the rainy season?
13. Is there any water recycling?
14. Are there elements of water pollution? What is the source of this and when does it happen?
15. How is the air quality and what pollutes the air?
16. How is waste disposed of (for example, are people incinerating plastics)?
17. Is there composting, recycling?
18. What is the nature of the vegetation in the community?
19. Are there gardens? Could there be more trees?
20. Is noise a problem?
21. Are things better/worse at different times of the year?
22. What could we do about it, do you think?

(Life History Interviews/In-depth Interviews)

1. How long have you been living here? When did you arrive here?
2. Can you please tell me about your childhood?
3. How has the environment changed since you have been here?
4. How do you describe some of the key things that make you feel good about this community?
5. In what specific ways has this community contributed to your well-being?
6. What key events in the history of this place (positive and negative aspects of the history) do you remember (prompt)?

(Thai Version)


การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง
(สำหรับคำถามการสนทนากลุ่ม)

1. ท่านคิดถึงอะไรเมื่อกล่าวถึงคำว่า ชุมชน ?
2. ท่านคิดว่าท่านเป็นสมาชิกของชุมชนอะไรบ้าง
3. ท่านคิดว่าคุณสมบัติแบบไหนที่สามารถค้าจุนชุมชนให้รวมเป็นหนึ่งเดียวกันได้?
4. ความรู้สึกร่วมเป็นเจ้าของชุมชนมีความหมายต่อท่านอย่างไร?
5. ทำไมท่านจึงคิดว่าการมีความรู้สึกร่วมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของกลุ่มชุมชนมีความสำคัญต่อคุณภาพชีวิตของท่าน?
6. กิจกรรมอะไรบ้างที่ท่านมีส่วนร่วมในชุมชน?
7. กิจกรรมใดที่ท่านชอบมากที่สุด ทำไมถึงคิดเช่นนั้น?
8. ท่านมีความภูมิใจต่อความสำเร็จในงานที่ท่านทำเพื่อชุมชนอย่างไร?
9. ท่านเคยได้ยิน คำว่า “การพัฒนาชุมชน” มาก่อนหน้านี้ไหม? และคำนี้มีความหมายต่อท่านอย่างไร?
10. ท่านเคยได้ยินคำว่า “สิ่งแวดล้อมที่ยั่งยืน” ไหม? ในขณะนี้คำนี้มีความหมายต่อชุมชนของท่านอย่างไร?
11. การใช้ประโยชน์ การเก็บน้ำสำรองเพื่ออุปโภค บริโภค และคุณภาพของน้ำในชุมชนเป็นอย่างไร?
12. ชุมชนมีการกำจัดน้ำเสียอย่างไร โดยเฉพาะช่วงฤดูฝน?
13. ในชุมชนมีการนำน้ำมาใช้ใหม่หรือไม่?
14. อะไรคือองค์ประกอบของมลภาวะทางน้ำ ? อะไรเป็นสาเหตุของปัญหามลภาวะทางน้ำ? และมลภาวะทางน้ำเกิดขึ้นเมื่อใด?
15. คุณภาพอากาศในชุมชนเป็นอย่างไร? อะไรที่เป็นตัวสร้างมลภาวะทางอากาศของชุมชน?
16. ในชุมชนมีการกำจัดขยะอย่างไร (ตัวอย่างเช่น คนชุมชนมีการเผาขยะพลาสติกหรือไม่?)
17. ในชุมชนมีการนำขยะมาหมักหรือไม่? หรือ มีการนำขยะกลับมาใช้ใหม่หรือไม่?
18. โดยธรรมชาติแล้ว ลักษณะพรรณพืชในชุมชนเป็นอย่างไร?
19. ในชุมชนมีสวน (ประเภทต่างๆ) หรือไม่? มีต้นไม้เหลืออยู่มากน้อยแค่ไหน?
20. ชุมชนมีปัญหาเสียงดังรบกวนหรือไม่?
21. ณ ช่วงฤดูต่างๆในรอบปีที่ผ่านมา ชุมชนมีสิ่งใดบ้างที่กำลังเปลี่ยนไปในทางที่ดีขึ้นและไม่ดี
22. อะไรบ้างที่เราสามารถทำเพื่อชุมชน ท่านคิดอย่างไร?

การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง
(สำหรับการสัมภาษณ์เชิงชีวประวัติและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก)

1. ท่านอาศัยที่ชุมชนแห่งนี้มานานแค่ไหน? ท่านมาอยู่ตั้งแต่เมื่อไหร่?
2. หากไม่เป็นการรบกวน ช่วยบอกผมเกี่ยวกับชีวิตในวัยเด็กให้ฟังสักหน่อยนะคะ?
3. ตั้งแต่ท่านมาอยู่ในชุมชนแห่งนี้ท่านเห็นสิ่งแวดล้อมต่างๆเปลี่ยนไปอย่างไร?
4. ท่านพอจะอธิบายได้ไหมว่ามีสิ่งสำคัญอะไรบ้างที่ช่วยให้ท่านรู้สึกอุ่นใจเกี่ยวกับชุมชนของท่าน?
5. ท่านพอจะช่วยระบุแนวทางเฉพาะว่าชุมชนของท่านได้ให้การช่วยเหลือต่อคุณภาพชีวิตของท่านอย่างไร?
6. ท่านพอจะจำเหตุการณ์หลักๆ (ทั้งแง่บวก และ แง่ต้องปรับปรุง) ที่เกิดขึ้นในชุมชนของท่านได้ไหม?

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PIS)



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMĀKI MAKĀU RĀU

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
XXXXXXX April 15, 2019

Project Title
How Faith matters: Al-Mubarak Muslim Community Development project for sustainable development. A Case Study from Udon Thani Province of Isan Region of Thailand.

An Invitation
My name is Imron Sohsan, a Thai Muslim, and I am currently undertaking doctoral study at AUT University's Institution of Public Policy, Auckland, New Zealand. I'd like to invite you to be part of my PhD research about this community.

What is the purpose of this research?
The research study will investigate the constructive role of faith in the development of our Al-Mubarak community and its environment. My research seeks to inform public policy processes and practices that support minority faith communities, as part of Thai civil society, to participate in community development at the local level. One focus of my work is inter-generational management of environmental issues.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?
Participants I am inviting to take part in this research will be members of Al-Mubarak Muslim community, or, Buddhist neighbours, and have been living and working in the community since it was established 25-30 years ago (?? Imron, correct this if necessary). You are a member of the community and therefore knowledgeable about life in the community. Your views on its development, and how we can take care of our environment will be valuable for my research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?
Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice). If you do wish to participate in this research project, please let me know in person or on the telephone.
You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

If you prefer not to join the research there will be no advantage or disadvantage for you.

What will happen in this research?
The research will involve interviews with two persons (one male, one female) representing Al-Mubarak mosque, two persons (one male, one female) who are the first generation of the community, two persons (one male, one female) working with the community's school, two persons (one male, one female) working with the community's foundation, and focus groups with the community's women group, youth football players and Buddhist neighbours.
I will also invite three men and three women, one from each from the Muslim community's generations of settlers, to make a transect walk across the village with me. This will involve walking about the village and its key community features to prompt recollections about the community as it developed....key decisions, key players, key events etc. These recollections and views will be important data for my research.

What are the benefits?

A major potential benefit from the research is to inform public policy issues around minority faith-based community development in Thailand. A local benefit will be to have Al-Mubarak Community development process and history available in document form to the community. I will send a summary report of my research to everyone who participated when my PhD thesis is published. I intend to write academic papers from the research and will make myself available to speak at local and international conferences to share my findings. **How will my privacy be protected?**

I will use a pseudonym for all participants in any presentations or published work for my research. Your identities will remain confidential to both myself and my academic supervisors. All data will be stored in a secure location.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

It would be great if you could get back to within a week to let me know whether you would like to participate in this research project. If you are interested in, I will then liaise with you regarding the details of a time and place to meet up.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Once my thesis is publicly available, I will send you an URL link so that you can easily access and read the full work if you choose. I will also provide a summary report which I will send out to all participants as soon as practicable after thesis completion. As mentioned earlier, I also plan to available to take part in any community gatherings or workshops where there may be an interest in discussing the research results and findings.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Professor Marilyn Waring at marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext. 9661, or my Field Supervisor, Assoc Prof John F Smith, Faculty of Public Health, Khon Kaen University, Johnsm@kku.ac.th or 085 748-8536.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor at ethics@aut.ac.nz, +64 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Imron Sohsan at mqm7867@autuni.ac.nz or imronso@kku.ac.th Phone: +66 630 017608 (Thailand)

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Professor Marilyn Waring at marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 9661

Assoc Prof John F Smith, Faculty of Public Health, Khon Kaen University, Johnsm@kku.ac.th or 085 748-8536.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation. I look forward to hearing back from you as soon as possible.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date final ethics approval was granted, AUTC Reference number type the reference number.

(Tha)

เอกสารชี้แจงข้อมูลแก่ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย

วันที่ 15 เดือน เมษายน พ.ศ. 2561

ชื่อโครงการวิจัย

“ความเครียดสำคัญ : การประยุกต์ใช้เชิงนโยบายสำหรับการพัฒนาชุมชนมุสลิม กรณีศึกษาจังหวัดสุราษฎร์ธานี ภาคอีสาน ประเทศไทย”

แนวปาดำ

ข้าพเจ้าชื่อนามอินทรี นามอินทรี เป็นชาวไทยมุสลิม ปัจจุบันกำลังศึกษาในระดับปริญญาเอก ณ สถาบันนโยบายสาธารณะ มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าธนบุรี กรุงเทพมหานคร

วัตถุประสงค์โครงการวิจัย

วัตถุประสงค์หลักของการวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของครูของโรงเรียนมุสลิมแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย พ.ศ. 2560 ว่าด้วยการปกป้องพุทธศาสนาและศาสนาอื่น ๆ เพื่อไปสู่การกำหนดแนวทางปฏิบัติและนโยบายการพัฒนาชุมชนของประเทศไทย

การศึกษานี้มีจุดมุ่งเน้นเพื่อตอบคำถามว่า ชุมชนมุสลิมสามารถประยุกต์ใช้คุณค่าทางศาสนาในกระบวนการกำหนดนโยบายสาธารณะการพัฒนาชุมชนอย่างไร? การประยุกต์ใช้คุณค่าทางศาสนาทำให้เกิดความท้าทายและโอกาสอะไรบ้างต่อการพัฒนาชุมชนมุสลิมในจังหวัดสุราษฎร์ธานี ตัวอย่างเช่น การศึกษาวิจัยมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับบทบาทเชิงสร้างสรรค์ของศาสนาที่มีต่อความผูกพันและการพัฒนาชุมชนมุสลิมในกระบวนการนโยบายสาธารณะ

อย่างไรก็ตาม การศึกษาวิจัยมีจุดมุ่งเน้นเพื่อต้องการตรวจสอบการพัฒนาแนวทางปฏิบัติและกระบวนการนโยบายสาธารณะที่ช่วยกระตุ้นกระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชนความเชื่ออื่น ๆ ในฐานชุมชนมุสลิมในประเทศไทยต่อการพัฒนาชุมชนของพวกเขาในระดับท้องถิ่น

ทำไมข้าพเจ้าขอเชิญชวนในการมีส่วนร่วมในโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้?

หนึ่งในข้อคำถามที่สำคัญมากของนโยบายสาธารณะที่หลายประเทศกำลังเผชิญอยู่นั้น ได้แก่ กลุ่มองค์กรศาสนา ซึ่งถือว่าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของภาคประชาสังคมนั้น จะสามารถถูกดึงอย่างสร้างสรรค์ได้อย่างไรในโครงการต่างๆในการพัฒนาชุมชนซึ่งต้องการมีส่วนร่วมในการกระตุ้นการสร้างความเข้าใจเชิงสนทนาระหว่าง และการสร้างชุมชนสันติภาพและมีส่วนร่วมอย่างแท้จริง ตัวอย่างเช่น การศึกษาวิจัยของข้าพเจ้ามีจุดมุ่งเน้นเพื่อต้องการตรวจสอบการพัฒนาแนวทางปฏิบัติและกระบวนการนโยบายสาธารณะที่ช่วยกระตุ้นกระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชนความเชื่ออื่น ๆ ในฐานชุมชนมุสลิมในประเทศไทยต่อการพัฒนาชุมชนของพวกเขาในระดับท้องถิ่น

นี่สำคัญของการศึกษาครั้งนี้ คือการนำตัวอย่างที่ได้เพื่อช่วยการตัดสินใจสำหรับการเพิ่มมีจิตสำนึกหรือเข้าสู่กระบวนการกำหนดนโยบายสาธารณะต่อการพัฒนาชุมชนภาคอีสานของประเทศไทย

ดังนั้น ข้าพเจ้าจึงได้ขอประสานงานมาจึงท่าน เพื่อขอสมัครเข้าร่วมสำหรับข้อมูลสำหรับโครงการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ ข้าพเจ้ามีความเชื่อมั่นว่าประสบการณ์และมุมมองของท่านจะเป็นประโยชน์อย่างมากสำหรับการวิจัยของข้าพเจ้าต่อไป

ข้าพเจ้าเห็นด้วยที่จะร่วมโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้อย่างไร?

การมีส่วนร่วมในโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้ของท่านนั้น คือ เป็นความสมัครใจ (เป็นแต่ทางเลือกเท่านั้น) ถึงกระนั้นก็ตาม การเข้าร่วมจะไม่ทำให้ท่านเสียประโยชน์ใดๆอย่างแน่นอน ซึ่งท่านสามารถที่จะขอถอนตัวจากการศึกษาครั้งนี้ได้ตลอดเวลา หากท่านได้ถอนตัวจากโครงการวิจัยไปแล้ว ท่านก็สามารถที่จะอนุญาตหรือไม่อนุญาตให้ข้าพเจ้านำข้อมูลที่ได้จากท่านไปใช้ประโยชน์ต่อการศึกษาดังกล่าวอีกครั้ง อย่างไรก็ตาม หากการวิจัยสิ้นสุดลงและมีข้อค้นพบต่างๆที่ได้จากการวิจัยครั้งนี้ ข้าพเจ้าก็จำเป็นต้องเก็บรักษาข้อมูลเหล่านั้นต่อไป

หากท่านตัดสินใจที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ ขอให้ท่านโปรดกรอกข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องในหนังสือยินยอมที่แนบมาที่พร้อมส่งกลับไปให้ข้าพเจ้าในขณะนี้หรือในโอกาสที่จะได้พบกันครั้งต่อไป ข้าพเจ้าได้ขอขอบคุณท่านมา ณ โอกาสนี้ด้วย

สิ่งที่จะเกิดขึ้นในโครงการวิจัยมีอะไรบ้าง?

ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้ หมายถึง ประชาชนที่มีสถานภาพเป็นสมาชิกและที่อยู่นับของชุมชนมุสลิมอิสลามาร็อก จังหวัดสุราษฎร์ธานี ภาคอีสาน ประเทศไทย พวกเขาจะมีส่วนร่วมในการทำงานสำหรับการพัฒนาชุมชนตั้งแต่ชุมชนอิสลามาร็อกจนถึง

ข้าพเจ้าได้ขอแบ่งประเภทและจำนวนผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการครั้งนี้ ดังนี้ ตัวแทนจากมัสยิดอิสลามาร็อก จำนวน 2 คน (ชาย 1 คน หญิง 1 คน) ตัวแทนจากสมาชิกกลุ่มแรกที่เข้ามาก่อตั้งชุมชน จำนวน 2 คน (ชาย 1 คน หญิง 1 คน) ตัวแทนจากโรงเรียนต้นตอวิทยา จำนวน 2 คน (ชาย 1 คน หญิง 1 คน) ตัวแทนจากมูลนิธิเพื่อการศึกษามุสลิมอิสลาม จำนวน 2 คน (ชาย 1 คน หญิง 1 คน) นอกจากนี้ จะมีการสนทนากับสมาชิกของกลุ่มสตรีมุสลิม ที่มัสยิดอิสลามาร็อก และ ที่ศูนย์บริการชุมชน และ ที่ศูนย์บริการชุมชน

ข้าพเจ้าหวังเป็นอย่างยิ่งว่า จะได้รับความร่วมมือจากท่านสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ 1 ชั่วโมงต่อครั้ง และขอขอบคุณสถาบันที่ก่อกำเนิดในการสัมภาษณ์ครั้งนี้ นอกจากนี้ ข้าพเจ้าขอความจำเป็นที่จะต้องขออนุญาตสัมภาษณ์ผ่านอีกรายหนึ่งเนื่องจากข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสัมภาษณ์นั้นมีประโยชน์อย่างยิ่งต่อการวิจัย แต่จะใช้เวลาสัมภาษณ์ไม่ถึง 1 ชั่วโมง

ประโยชน์จากโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้

ผลผลิตจากโครงการวิจัยในครั้งนี้คือ วิชานิพนธ์ของข้าพเจ้า ข้าพเจ้ามีความตั้งใจที่จะผลิตบทความวิชาการจากโครงการวิจัยและต้องการนำไปเผยแพร่ในการประชุมวิชาการระหว่างประเทศในประเทศไทยและในเวทีนานาชาติต่อไป อย่างไวก็ตาม หากโครงการวิจัยดำเนินการเสร็จสิ้น ข้าพเจ้าขอดำเนินการส่งบทสรุปโครงการวิจัยให้กับผู้เกี่ยวข้องต่อไป ด้วยเหตุนี้ ข้อมูลต่างๆที่ได้จากท่านจะนำไปใช้เพื่อเป็นประโยชน์ต่อโครงการวิจัยของข้าพเจ้าเท่านั้น และจะไม่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเผยแพร่ใดๆทั้งสิ้น

ความเป็นส่วนตัวได้รับการปกป้องอย่างไร

ข้าพเจ้าพยายามจะต้องปกป้องตัวตนของผู้เข้าร่วมอย่างดีที่สุด หากท่านเห็นส่วนที่จะให้ข้าพเจ้าสัมภาษณ์ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นการเปิดเผยชื่อของท่านในโครงการวิจัยหรือไม่ก็ตาม หรือหากท่านต้องการปกป้องตัวตนของท่านเป็นความลับ ข้าพเจ้าจะทบทวนและใช้ภาษาที่เหมาะสมในแง่ของคำอธิบายงานวิจัย และบทความทางวิชาการของข้าพเจ้า หากท่านต้องการให้เปิดเผยตัวตน ข้าพเจ้าขอดำเนินการตรวจสอบความถูกต้องและสงวนข้อมูลไม่ให้ท่านพิจารณา ก่อนที่จะมีการระบุตัวตนของท่านในวิทยานิพนธ์ต่อไป ข้อมูลวิจัยทั้งหมดจะถูกเก็บไว้อย่างปลอดภัย และโปรดเข้าใจตรงกันว่า ท่านอาจถอนตัวจากโครงการวิจัยได้ตลอดเวลาที่ท่านต้องการโดยปราศจากความเสียหายที่มีต่อโครงการวิจัย

โอกาสในบ้างที่พิจารณาจากคำเชิญเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย

ข้าพเจ้ามีความยินดีเป็นอย่างยิ่ง หากท่านพิจารณาที่จะเข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยตามวันเวลาที่ได้แจ้งไว้
(วันที่ เดือน พ.ศ. 2561) หากท่านมีความสนใจ ข้าพเจ้าขอดำเนินการประสานงานกับท่านตามรายละเอียดที่ได้ตกลงกัน

ข้าพเจ้าจะได้รับการขอบคุณจากแหล่งข้อมูลของการวิจัยอย่างไร

เมื่อวิทยานิพนธ์ได้รับการเผยแพร่อย่างเป็นทางการ ข้าพเจ้าขอสนับสนุนสิ่งดี ๆ เพื่อท่านจะได้เข้าถึงข้อมูลและสามารถอ่านวิทยานิพนธ์ที่ฉบับได้สะดวก จากนั้น ข้าพเจ้าขอดำเนินการจัดส่งรายงานสรุปให้ท่านและผู้เข้าร่วมทุกคนให้เร็วที่สุดหลังจากที่วิทยานิพนธ์เสร็จสิ้น

หากมีข้อกังวลในโครงการวิจัยข้าพเจ้าควรดำเนินการอย่างไร

หากมีข้อกังวลใดๆที่เกิดจากโครงการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ มีความจำเป็นที่จะต้องรับปรึกษาที่ปรึกษาโครงการวิจัยเป็นการด่วน โปรดติดต่อที่ปรึกษาของข้าพเจ้า ได้แก่ ศาสตราจารย์ ดร. นารีสิน วาจิณ ได้ที่ narinyn.warng@ku.ac.th หรือหมายเลขโทรศัพท์ +64 9 921 9999 ต่อ 9661 หรือถ้าที่ประเด็นกังวลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับกระบวนการวิจัย สามารถติดต่อเลขาฯของการประชุมการวิจัยของมหาวิทยาลัยได้แก่ คุณเกศ ใต้ คณบดี โทร. +66 830017608 หรือหมายเลขโทรศัพท์ +64 921 9999 ต่อ 6038

บุคคลใดบ้างที่สามารถติดต่อขอข้อมูลเพิ่มเติม

โปรดเก็บเอกสารชิ้นนี้และข้อมูลผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย และหนังสือยินยอมไว้เพื่อใช้ในการอ้างอิง และท่านสามารถติดต่อโดยตรงกับทีมวิจัยได้ตามรายละเอียดด้านล่างนี้

รายละเอียดนักวิจัย

นายณิรชน ไธสัน

อีเมล nirachai@ku.ac.th หรือ imrakasongkham.ac.th หรือหมายเลขโทรศัพท์ +64 9 921 9999 ต่อ 4169 หรือ +66 830017608 (หมายเลขโทรศัพท์ในประเทศไทย)

รายละเอียดอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา


ศาสตราจารย์ ดร. นารีสิน วาจิณ

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“ข้าพเจ้าได้ขอขอบคุณท่านมา ณ โอกาสนี้ และหวังเป็นอย่างยิ่งว่า จะได้รับความร่วมมือจากท่านในโอกาสต่อไป”

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORMS

Interviews Consent Form


 TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
 O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Consent Form

Project title: *How Faith matters: Al- Mubarak Muslim Community for Sustainable Development : A Case Study of Udon Thani Province of Isan Region of Thailand.*

Project Supervisor: *Professor Dr Marilyn Waring, Associate Professors Dr Love Chile and Dr John F Smith*

Researcher: *Imron Sohson*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated on 7 January 2019.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I wish/I don't wish to be identified.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date :

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number 18/428.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

(Thai)
หนังสือยินยอม
สำหรับการสัมภาษณ์

ชื่อโครงการวิจัย “ความศรัทธาสัญลักษณ์อย่างไร : การประยุกต์ใช้เงินนโยบายสำหรับการพัฒนาชุมชนมุสลิม กรณีศึกษา จังหวัดอุดรธานี ภาคอีสาน ประเทศไทย”

อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา ศาสตราจารย์ ดร. มาริณี วารัง รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร. เลิฟ เอ็ม ซิลี และ รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร. จอห์น เอฟ สมิต

นักวิจัย นายอิมรอน โส๊ะสัน

- ข้าพเจ้าได้อ่านและเข้าใจข้อมูลสำหรับโครงการวิจัยจากเอกสารชี้แจงข้อมูลแก่ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยเป็นที่เรียบร้อยแล้ว ณ วันที่ 7 เดือน มกราคม พ.ศ. 2562
- ข้าพเจ้าได้รับโอกาสในการตั้งคำถามและได้รับคำตอบเป็นที่เรียบร้อยแล้ว
- ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจดีว่าการจัดบันทึกข้อมูลระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์นั้นจะมีการบันทึกเทปและถอดเทปหลังจากสัมภาษณ์เสร็จสิ้น
- ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจแล้วว่าการร่วมโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้ คือ ความสมัครใจ (เป็นทางเลือกของข้าพเจ้าเอง) และข้าพเจ้าอาจยุติได้ทุกเวลาโดยไม่รู้สึกรังเกียจหรือถูกเอาเปรียบแต่อย่างใด
- ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจแล้วว่า หากข้าพเจ้าได้ถอนตัวจากโครงการวิจัยไปแล้ว ข้าพเจ้ามีอิสระที่จะอนุญาตหรือไม่อนุญาตให้นำข้อมูลที่ได้จากข้าพเจ้าเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการศึกษา อย่างไรก็ตาม หากโครงการวิจัยสิ้นสุดลงและมีข้อค้นพบต่างๆที่ได้จากการวิจัยครั้งนี้ นักวิจัยสามารถเก็บรักษาข้อมูลเหล่านี้ต่อไป
- ข้าพเจ้ามีความยินดีในการร่วมโครงการวิจัยในครั้งนี้
- ข้าพเจ้ายินดีที่จะรับรายงานสรุปผลการวิจัยต่อไป (โปรดเลือก) ใช่ ไม่ใช่
- ข้าพเจ้ามีความประสงค์/ไม่มีความประสงค์เปิดเผยตัวตนในโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้

ลายเซ็น.....ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย

(.....) ชื่อผู้เข้าร่วม

รายละเอียดที่สามารถติดต่อได้ (ถ้าท่านเห็นว่าเหมาะสม)


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วันที่.....

เอกสารฉบับนี้ได้รับการรับรองจากคณะกรรมการจริยธรรมของมหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีแห่งไอศุกแลนด์ เมื่อวันที่ เดือน พ.ศ. 2561 ตามหมายเลขอ้างอิงที่ 18/428

หมายเหตุ ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการควรเก็บเอกสารฉบับนี้ไว้

Focus Group Discussion Consent Form

		
		TE WĀHANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RĀU
<h3>Consent Form</h3>		
Project title:	<i>How Faith matters: Al- Mubarak Muslim Community for Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Udon Thani Province of Isan Region of Thailand.</i>	
Project Supervisor:	<i>Professor Dr Marilyn Waring, Associate Professors Dr Love Chile and Dr John F Smith</i>	
Researcher:	<i>Imran Sabags</i>	
<input type="radio"/>	I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated on 7 January 2019	
<input type="radio"/>	I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.	
<input type="radio"/>	I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the <u>group</u> and I agree to keep this information confidential.	
<input type="radio"/>	I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.	
<input type="radio"/>	I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.	
<input type="radio"/>	I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.	
<input type="radio"/>	I agree to take part in this research.	
<input type="radio"/>	I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>	I wish/I don't wish to be identified.	
<u>Participant's signature:</u> _____		
<u>Participant's name:</u> _____		
<u>Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):</u> _____ _____ _____		
<u>Date:</u> _____		
Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on <i>type the date on which the final approval was granted</i> AUTEC Reference number 18/428.		
Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.		

(Thai)

หนังสือยินยอม
สำหรับการสนทนากลุ่ม

ชื่อโครงการวิจัย "ความศรัทธาสำคัญอย่างไร : การประยุกต์ใช้เชิงนโยบายสำหรับการพัฒนาชุมชนมุสลิม กรณีศึกษา จังหวัดอุดรธานี ภาคอีสาน ประเทศไทย"

อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา ศาสตราจารย์ ดร. มาริฮิโกะ วาริง รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร. เลิฟ เอ็ม ซิสี และ รองศาสตราจารย์ จอห์น เอฟ. สนิท

นักวิจัย นายอิสรณ์ โสรัตน์

- ข้าพเจ้าได้อ่านและเข้าใจข้อมูลสำหรับโครงการวิจัยจากเอกสารชี้แจงข้อมูลแก่ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัยเป็นที่เรียบร้อยแล้ว ณ วันที่ 7 เดือน มกราคม พ.ศ. 2562
- ข้าพเจ้าได้รับโอกาสในการตั้งคำถามและได้รับคำตอบเป็นที่เรียบร้อยแล้ว
- ข้าพเจ้ามีความตระหนักดีว่า ตัวตนของเพื่อนผู้ร่วมโครงการและการสนทนากลุ่มเป็นสิ่งที่ต้องปกปิดเป็นความลับ ข้าพเจ้ายินดีที่จะรักษาความลับในการสนทนากลุ่มนี้
- ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจแล้วว่าการจัดบันทึกข้อมูลระหว่างการสัมภาษณ์นั้นจะมีการบันทึกเทปและถอดเทปหลังจากสัมภาษณ์เสร็จสิ้น
- ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจแล้วว่าการร่วมโครงการวิจัยครั้งนี้ คือ ความสมัครใจ (เป็นทางเลือกของข้าพเจ้าเอง) และข้าพเจ้าอาจยุติได้ทุกเวลาโดยไม่รู้สึกว่าการเอาเปรียบต่ออย่างไร
- ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจแล้วว่า หากข้าพเจ้าได้ถอนตัวจากโครงการวิจัยไปแล้ว ข้าพเจ้ามีอิสระที่จะอนุญาตหรือไม่อนุญาตให้นำข้อมูลที่ได้จากข้าพเจ้าเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการศึกษา อย่างไรก็ตาม หากโครงการวิจัยสิ้นสุดลงและมีข้อค้นพบต่างๆที่ได้จากการวิจัยครั้งนี้ นักวิจัยสามารถเก็บรักษาข้อมูลเหล่านี้ต่อไป
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ลายเซ็น.....ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการวิจัย

(.....) ชื่อผู้เข้าร่วม

รายละเอียดที่สามารถติดต่อได้ (ถ้าท่านเห็นว่าเหมาะสม)

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วันที่.....

เอกสารฉบับนี้ได้รับการรับรองจากคณะกรรมการจริยธรรมของมหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าธนบุรี เมื่อวันที่ เดือน พ.ศ. 2561 ตามหมายเลขอ้างอิงที่ 18/428

หมายเหตุ ผู้เข้าร่วมโครงการควรเก็บเอกสารฉบับนี้ไว้