



Against All Odds: Khiriwong's Creative Community

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Concepts of Community and Sustainable Development

Community participation, both in theory and practice has often been cited as a requisite for sustainable development. That local communities play a pivotal role in the accomplishment of Agenda 21 for sustainable development in the 21st century produced by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro is a widely accepted idea. However, despite the increasing credence provided to community approaches in principle, community engagements as a practice still remains an exception rather than a rule.

The concept of community is often understood as being to do with “locality”, “with actual social groups”, with “a particular quality of relationship” that is “felt to be more immediate than society”. A sense of community usually associates people to a geographical space and in certain relationships. (Warburton and Yoshimura 2005 20) Nevertheless, there are almost always different sorts of communities within a given area. Communities are formed according to history, ethnicity, or religion. Varied and sometimes fragmented or conflicted, communities are constantly evolving and transforming.

Regardless of the intricacies in definition and interpretation, communities provide a useful focus for government policies and institutional documents citing it as its aim, its participant, a process or a location. As Aim, communities are referred to explain why various programs are undertaken and what they seek to achieve. Communities have always been mentioned as participants to explain who are involved in developmental activities and as stakeholders in the implementation of plans, policies and programs. As process, communities are cited to describe how things should happen by way of local action, engagement and involvement. When identified as locality, communities are used to denote where programs are effected.

The generally accepted starting point for the concept of sustainable development was the 1972 report *Limits to Growth* undertaken by an international group of scientists, researchers and

industrialists (the Club of Rome). The report provided a potent analysis of the problems of following conventional approaches to economic growth in a finite global system and proposed:

It is possible...to establish a condition of ecological and economic stability that is sustainable far into the future. The state of global equilibrium could be designed so that the basic material needs of each person on earth are satisfied and each person has an equal opportunity to realize his individual human potential. (Meadows et al 1983)

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) led by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland in its report created the following definition of sustainable development:

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. (WCED 1987:8)

The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro where Agenda 21 was signed pronounced:

Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being. However, integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer more prosperous future. No one nation can achieve this on its own; but together we can – in a global partnership for sustainable development. (Agenda 21, paragraph 1.1)

The environment is only one aspect of sustainable development. The economic facets must likewise be equally considered to achieve a balance between what Brundtland refers to as “different quality of growth” and most western governments’ concept of maintaining high levels of economic growth and employment. While the social dimensions of sustainable development may be less debatable, several social issues recurrently emerge as far as sustainable development is concerned. The list could well include: health and safety, quality of life, poverty, fairness and

equity, governance, democracy and participation, human rights, values, and knowledge. New arguments on the concept of resource productivity that include efficient use of finite natural resources and better waste management and sustainable production and consumption bring together the environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development more effectively. And as stated...

...the environment is where we all live, and development is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode. The two are inseparable. (WCED 1987:xi)

Communities have a three-fold role in sustainable development. First, as consumers of services and products, particularly public goods and services – “the quality of goods and services is highly dependent on the trust between provider and user of that service. (Skidmore, et al, 2003) Second, as co-producers of public goods and services. Sharing responsibility as well as rights – citizens are simply the passive recipients of services delivered by the state on their behalf when “in fact their consent and active participation is crucial to the quality of goods and services they receive...they are best understood as being ‘co-producers’, with citizens and the state working together. (Skidmore, et al, 2003) Lastly, as citizens operating in the political sphere where decisions are made about public priorities and resources, taking into account the needs of others. People “think and act differently as citizens than they do as consumers” (Skidmore, et al, 2003) and decisions about public goods and public value are inherently political contests that require the public to engage as citizens not consumers.

The importance of the community’s role in achieving sustainable development has been widely recognized.

The law alone cannot enforce the common interest. It principally needs community knowledge and support, which entails greater public participation in the decisions which affect the environment. This is best secured by decentralizing the management of resources upon which local communities depend, and giving these communities an effective say over the use of resources. It will also require promoting citizens’ initiatives, empowering people’s organizations, and strengthening local democracy. (WCED 1987:63)

Sustainable development must be achieved at every level of society. People's organizations, women's groups and non-governmental organizations are important sources of innovation and action at the local level and have a strong interest and proven ability to promote sustainable livelihoods. Governments, in cooperation with appropriate international and non-governmental organizations, should support a community driven approach to sustainability. (Agenda 21, paragraph 3.7)

Setting the Scene

Khiriwong community is located in Tambon (or sub district) Kamloan, Lan Saka District of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province that is approximately seven hundred eighty (780) kilometers south of Bangkok, Thailand. Situated along the Klong Thadee River Basin, water to the community comes from Khao Luang Peak, a part of Nakhon Si Thammarat mountain range. Three major tributaries, Klong Thachai, Klong Thaha and Klong Pong, run through the community. These three canals merge in front of Khiriwong village to form Klong Thadee that continues to Nakhon Si Thammarat and empty into the sea at Pak Nakhon. As a watershed community that gives rise to many major tributaries, khiriwong was originally known as Ban Khun Nam. This literally means “upstream” or “watershed area”. The community later became recognized as Muban Khiriwong or Ban Khiriwong when the temple Wat Khiriwong was established there.

Geographically surrounded by mountains and covering 16250 rai or 2,600 hectares (6.25 rais are equivalent to 1 hectare), Khiriwong has a population of 2,162 in 626 household. Khiriwong is made up of four sub-communities or villages that share tradition – Khiriwong (Moo 5), Khirithong (Moo 8), Khunxhiri (Moo 9) and Khiritham (Moo 10).

According to occupation, 80% of the villagers are farmers while the rest are wage earners and government officials and workers. The average per capita income is Bht 59,250 annually while the average expense per person, per annum is Bht 49,831. In terms of landholding, each villager holds 13.68 rais of land. Only 68% of these landholdings have been issued with land title deeds. This and ecological constraints are the main reason why villagers cannot expand their farmland. Some families do not have enough land to generate sufficient income for their families. So that



aside from farming, they still need to take up other jobs such as working for other fellow farmers and working outside the community.

Administratively, khiriwong is recognized as a “Muban”. A Muban (หมู่บ้าน) is an administrative village of a sub district. This may contain more than one settlement, or a large settlement may be split into more than one administrative village. It is the lowest administrative subdivision of Thailand. A village headman and “kamnan” or chief officer at the sub-district level governs a muban. Both are elected official. The Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) functions at the sub-district level. It is composed of two elected officials from each village. Apart from these officials, natural leaders still play an important role in Khiriwong. Such natural leaders are either older persons or leaders of some previous development activities. They are respected for their integrity and contributions to solve community problems. Several groups have been formed to serve the interest of the community and their leaders are those trusted by the people. In Khiriwong, both official leaders and natural leaders work hand in hand for the common good of the community.

Due to its location, Khiriwong has been ravaged by natural disasters that have struck the village. These natural disasters brought not only dramatic geographical changes but also transformations in economic, social and cultural landscapes. The manner by which natural resources are managed has been mainly influenced by the community’s recurring experience of flooding. Tropical Storm Harriet hit the community in 1962 and caused extensive damages to houses and fruit orchards. Soil erosion has been exacerbated as the trees were uprooted. There were no buffer to protect the village from gushing winds. The community’s water-based transport system was stopped after the disaster because the storm destroyed the canal that people use to access places outside the community. Henceforth, the citizens of Khiriwong community paved roads and built a bridge that beckoned the change to a land-based transport system for the community.

In 1975, at a time when Khiriwong had already been influenced by capitalism and their children were sent to schools outside the community, it again experienced another major storm that flooded and swept the entire community. This caused not only massive damages to properties but many lives were likewise lost. The villagers blasted portions of the mountain to

build roads and restore the community infrastructure using their own financial resources. Fruit cultivation was also affected. The villagers had to resort to borrowing money from outside the community which they utilized to revive their farms. This made the people realize the importance of having a contingency fund for the community. So that in 1980, they formed the Khiriwong Savings Cooperative for Agricultural Production.

Then again in 1988, a most destructive typhoon struck Khiriwong and caused the biggest flood ever. Gushing water from the mountain swept away homes, schools, and the temple hall of Wat Khiriwong. The course of the river changed, running through the middle of the community splitting it into half. Because of this incident, the community members realize the importance of the need to exist in harmony with nature. The people of Khiriwong became aware that their survival rest on a sustainable environment. It was also at this time when many government agencies and non-government organizations visited the village and offered assistance. Komol Kimthong Foundation provided vocational training and community development support to the villagers. A reforestation fund was set up in collaboration with organizations from outside the community to restore the forest. Local villagers participated in forest preservation and restoration activities by growing trees from the low-lying area to the top of Khao Luang.

While there are three kinds of leader for the Khiriwong community there is a balance of power and not a single group has a monopoly of power. These leaders are the natural leaders or elders in the village, leaders of the various self-sustainable groups and government authorities (village chiefs, local administrative organization members). Today, Khiriwong is a sustainable community that is based on equal trust and belief between the people and its leaders.

Community-centered Approaches to Sustainable Environmental Management

Largely dependent on nature for their livelihood, the people of Khiriwong realized the importance of a balanced relationship between humans and nature. To them, forests are a common ground where everyone has access to collect food, medicine and other needs. These forests serve as the space where the people of Khirwong practice “Suan Som Rom” . This literally translates to “ a mixture of things”. In Suan Som Rom, a mixture of fruits, vegetables and herbs are grown intermittently with the existing trees in the forests. Plants of different heights are planted at three levels – as undergrowth, middle height and extreme height. Each

community member is entitled to specified plots of land to cultivate and gain income. However, the current state policy on forestry including the declaration of National Park over the community's farmland has deprived them of the rights to own the land.

The community is also aware that taking care of the forest ensures not only ample supply of potable water but protection from gushing water during monsoon. Hence, preserving the forests and water is a significant to the community. There are several agreements that have been made to declare specific portions of the streams as fish sanctuaries.

Since the community has been struck by three devastating floods occurring every thirteen years (1962, 1975, 1988), community based groups were formed to cope with community problems. The four major categories of community-based organizations that operate in Khiriwong are:

1. Mutual support group

Khiriwong Savings Cooperative for Agricultural Production provides for capital and welfare of the whole community including welfare for older persons, educational and health support, inc. First founded in 1980, it had 22 members. As of May 30, 2004, the number grew to 2,300 with about 60 million baht of funds.

2. Income generating group

Organized after floods inundated Khiriwong in 1988, various groups to help community members to generate income include: Farming group for the environment, Sweet making housewife group, Durian jam group, Natural dyeing group, Herbal group, Batik making group, Food preservation group among others. The after effects of flooding practically forced the community to change from sustenance agriculture to growing cash crops . Since cash crop production did not generate much income there was a need for innovative ideas to improve their livelihood. Creative and cooperative efforts to enhance livelihood activities was at the core of forming these groups.

3. Environmental and natural resource group

The group has been formed to undertake natural restoration and reforestation activities. Keep Khaoluang Green Fund was founded in 1988 and carried out activities focused on the local wisdom, time-honored beliefs and cultures of the Khiriwong community to raise

environmental awareness. Their initial work included educating tourists who trek Khao Luang. As an offshoot, the Khao Luang Eco-Tourism Club was established to carry out eco-tourism activities. To date, this tourism club caters to both local and foreign guests of the community.

4. Youth group

Aware of the importance and leadership potential of the youth, two main youth groups were formed. The Seree Pattana group comprised of village children who are 17 years old and above. The objective of forming this group is to emphasize to the youth of the community their important role in environmental citizenship through the provision of various skills (i.e. musical). The Look Khun Nam group of younger children was organized to enable their elders to pass on traditional knowledge and to help the younger generation to understand their history and way of life of their community including Suan Som Rom, weaving, batik making, etc.

The state's national development plans brought about societal and economic changes. Economic programs that included logging concession, promotion of cash crops or other industrial crops such as rubber, palm, coffee, fruit orchard, etc were undertaken. These programs relied heavily on the use of natural resources. In terms of community development, efforts were directed to promote organization of groups that participated in several competitions like those for outstanding villages, occupational clusters, etc. Such changes have affected the traditional livelihood of the community. The mountain-bounded Khiriwong community must adapt to societal shifts and cope with natural changes. The community must prepare for new state policies on the use of public land such as the declaration of national park and forest reserve over the community's farmland that has brought about conflicts in the community. The forest reserve declaration aims to promote natural conservation with the overall power in the hands of the state. The process lack public participation and as a result, people in Khiriwong have banded together to demand their roles in decision concerning the forests and to ensure that their community rights are recognized in state policies.

Tourism promotion has been a major policy of the state. Since the economic crisis of 1997, the Thai government instituted a policy to allow the use of part of the National Park for eco-

tourism. The roles of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) became the main implementing agency. However, TAT's concept and approaches toward tourism differ from that of the Khiriwong community. The eco-tourism organized by the Khiriwong Community is based on collaboration with organizations in state and private sectors. There is great community efforts to confront the challenge resulting from the tension between tourism and consumerism.

As Khiriwong has been destroyed by natural disasters on several occasions, it has been the beneficiary of much help from the state and private organizations by way of promoting community and livelihood development, natural conservation and restoration among others. The community of Khiriwong has to negotiate to maintain its independence and self-reliance. It has thus been known as a strong community, able to rebuild quickly after natural disasters, self-reliant and utilizes local wisdom to solve both social and economic problems.

Exploring Civic Creativity

Innovative people, organizations and projects, or technologies are not scarce. The crucial issue is to determine whether there are truly creative and innovative communities. For a community to be creative, a fusion of interests, cultures, perspectives and, crucially, power configurations need to be aligned in such a way that innovative, liberal processes and discussions are entrenched. These are preconditions that nurture a creative environment that support people to think, plan and act with imagination. The communities more likely to be innovative are those that had key people who shared a certain culture and attitude and are able to withstand the forces of a simplistic market-driven focus. These communities seem to be able to develop civic creativity – one that is defined as imaginative problem solving for the common good. It is where community members become calculated risk-takers and entrepreneurial within a framework of accountability and other stakeholders, both public and private recognize that working for the public benefit is good for their own long-term interest.

Khiriwong pursued to develop a comprehensive action plan for the area through a participatory decision-making process. This plan was focused on environmental sustainability and cultural preservation with enhanced public awareness and participation as overarching goal. The comprehensive action plan prepared included a range of interventions such as public and private investments in strategic environmental infrastructure, community cooperative

engagement in environmentally sound businesses, and image-building and marketing through cultural heritage preservation and eco-tourism development. Community reconstruction after the natural disasters was to be achieved through increasing land values and income opportunities.

Moving from a top-down model of planning and decision-making has required officials, and the communities themselves, to develop capacities that enable local communities to become an effective part of the planning and development process. Several stakeholders gave the all important support for the planning process. While not working together at the same time, the key actors were:

- Village headman and community committee. The headman is elected every four years with a responsibility to look after the quality of life in the village. His primary role was solicit ideas on community-based initiatives and encourage people to participate in the planning process. The community committee helps the headman with a variety of village activities.
- Sub-district (Tambon) Administrative Organization. As a local government body, this office was responsible for providing basic facilities in the area, including local roads, electricity, telephones, water supply and solid waste management.
- Community cooperatives. Various cooperatives were locally formed to work on the development of local products, e.g. agricultural products and souvenirs. Most of the members are women and elderly people but special youth organizations were likewise formed to instill environmental awareness.

Many communities and planners have started to consider the principles of sustainable development as they prepare plans and policies for future development since the Brundtland Commission Report, *Our common future* was released. (WCED 1987) Several objectives and principles of sustainable community planning have been observed in Khirwong that include:

1. Participation. Residents of the community were able to maintain control of tourism development by being involved in setting the community tourism vision, identifying the resources to be maintained and enhanced, and developing goals and strategies for tourism development and management. Residents participated in the implementation of strategies as well as the operation of the tourism infrastructure, services and facilities.

2. Stakeholders involvement. The comprehensive plan of action for Khiriwongs reconstruction from disaster was developed with the help of broad-based community input.
3. Local ownership. Programs that were instituted provided quality employment for Khiriwong community residents. Provision of fulfilling jobs must be seen as an integral part of any economic development at the local level.
4. Sustainability of the resource base. Economic activities within Khiriwong were planned to ensure the provision of intergenerational equity, with equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of development for present and future generations
5. Community goals. Living in harmony with nature was the overarching goal. This is being accomplished through broad community support and a proper balance between economic, social, cultural and human objectives.
6. Cooperation. Cooperation among the various local economic groups was essential given that one business or operation can be directly affected by the performance or quality of another.
7. Monitoring and evaluating. Guidelines were established for business and tourism operations to ensure sustainability of the community.
8. Accountability. The development plan being one for recovery and reconstruction of Khiriwong moved away from a traditional growth-oriented model to one that focused on opportunities for employment, income and improved local well-being while ensuring that development decisions reflect the full values of the natural and cultural environments.
9. Training. The establishment of education and training programs to improve public understanding and enhance business, vocational and professional skills, especially for women was a salient feature.
10. Promotion. The comprehensive plan also included the promotion of appropriate activities that protect their environment and draw from and reinforce landscape character, sense of place, community identity and site opportunities.

It will be Khiriwong's key challenge to ensure that the above principles are continually and consistently implemented.

A Focus on Community Involvement

The strength of Khiriwong lies in the involvement of its community members. Their story of recovery has highlighted some of the key features of innovative communities. That communities possess the abilities and creativity to design community visions and initiate activities and take action to fulfill these visions have been demonstrated in Khiriwong. The community was able to achieve them because it has sufficient knowledge of their environment (natural, cultural, historical) and available resources were accumulated and stored within the community. With available knowledge and resources, communities like Khiriwong were able to take a holistic approach, recognizing basic human needs, and relating it to human development and environmental sustainability. Likewise, Khiriwong had the willingness and ability to work under the shared commitment of all related partners, from within and outside their community. In the process, the initiatives taken by the community not only contributed to the solution of their environmental problems in the short-term, but also global environmental problems in the long-term.

Lessons of effectiveness, ethics and demand culled from the story of Khiriwong draw increasing attention to the significance of community participation.

- Effectiveness

Conventional, externally driven and expert-led projects and programs have failed to achieve the significant long-term effects sought (Rahman, 1993); immediate improvements were not valued or maintained locally, and the necessary long-term changes in individual people and social structures did not materialize. Innovative, participatory approaches that bring otherwise marginal groups into development processes and given wider decision making roles are seen to contribute further to greater effectiveness by reducing the social divisions that can lead to conflict.

- Ethics.

An emphasis on the right to participate in which communities and individual citizens are rightful and legitimate participants in processes that affect them is emerging.

- Demand.

There is declining participation in the formal processes of democracy (voting and membership in political parties) and growing interest in other forms of political participation, such as protest movement and direct action. Alternative, direct participatory processes have grown in importance. Non-governmental organizations are perceived to be better trusted by the public than governments and have enjoyed substantial influence both as a result of or resulting in increased memberships.

Based on experience and through qualitative assessments, sustainable development reaps considerable beneficial effects when the community participates. The benefits are as follows:

1. Better and appropriate projects can be developed to solve community problems and seize opportunities by bringing together expert advice and local wisdom in project design, development and management.
2. People of the community are more likely to support and look after initiatives that involve them in decision-making and implementation, thus reducing repair and maintenance costs on the public purse and prolonging the relationship of care and concern.
3. Conflict can be reduced when stakeholders are involved at the early stage of project development, reducing major problems and costly delays at later stages.

Community involvement enhances individual capabilities and reinforces communities.

4. Community organizations can become more secure, and individuals can become more confident, more aware and better able to do more.

While debates on who are actually benefitting from community activities are considerable, the list may include those managing community projects, consumers of facilities or services developed and those local citizens who benefit from wider, less tangible improvements in the community. For those directly involved a range of tangible benefits include, development of personal skills and confidence in dealing with public institutions. New social relationships can also lead to improved social status and an increase in hopes and aspirations. Immediate practical

benefits such as improved access to local services and involvement in wider networks that allow access to further training and employment opportunities may be noted. It has been reported that those who felt empowered to make their own decisions, who were engaged in community activities and who lived in places with strong neighborhood social capital were less likely to report poor health and less likely to have unhealthy lifestyles (UK Dept. of Health, 1998)

Unless involvement is explicitly part of the overall purpose of the project – an end as well as a means- then the initiative is unlikely to be sustainable. Planning for community involvement as an aspiration in itself (transformative), and seeing civil renewal as the ultimate aim that depends on active citizens, can provide the rationale for developing coherent strategies for community involvement. These strategies can also focus on investment in specific capacity-building needs of public, private and voluntary organizations as well as for communities. Likewise, a strategy for changes in institutional structures that ease citizen access to decision-making processes and wider active engagement must be designed. Participation can then become a earnest cycle of involvement and positive action.

Sustainable development could only be achieved through significant modifications in the priorities and decisions of individuals. Current work on environmental citizenship has increasingly paid attention to the development of a shared sense of the common good and the rights and responsibilities of citizens within the framework of a common good. The task of the community to wield moral pressure or an informed social pressure is vital to the attainment of a critical mass of citizens who “practice what they preach” in terms of environmental responsibilities and promoting and enforcing principles of environmental justice – the true essence of environmental citizenship.

Sustainable development entails innovation – transforming the way institutions, organizations and individuals operate. It cannot be business as usual alongside environmental compromises. The requisite innovations must consider reforming management systems; new technologies; monitoring, regulation and enforcement within accepted standards. To be effective and have considerable impact, it is crucial that all stakeholders, specifically local communities actively participate in all these changes.

Sustaining Momentum: The Way Forward

The most difficult task is to build and sustain momentum. The manner by which this occurs varies from place to place. A number of lessons can be learned that could buttress the drive for a community's innovative vision and creative initiative by looking at the community in focus - a community that has placed the sustainability agenda at its very core:

- The most important precondition is the presence of a group of activists, some of whom are likely to be mavericks, with in-depth knowledge of sustainable issues. Ideally these people are connected in some way to power structures or have a strategy of influence to reach each and have an impact on them.
- The group needs dynamic thinkers as well as doers – innovation is not just about having ideas but also about how these are implemented and managed.
- There is a need for strong internal and external communication linkages internally to keep up with current thinking and best practices.
- Any strategy that is formulated to entrench creative sustainable development must aim to create a sense of ownership of an innovative process. It must also ensure that it is understood by all community stakeholders to guarantee their support and participation. It should highlight the need to enhance people's creative capacity to solve their own problems.

In Conclusion

Innovativeness and creativity are essential to confront the intricacies as well as develop a community that has to persistently deal with divergent interests and objectives amidst environmental challenges. Conclusively, an innovative environment can be characterized as determined, goal-oriented, engaged in calculated risk-taking, governed through participatory leadership, and resolved to go beyond prevailing political cycles. Also vital to such an innovative community environment is the ability to be strategically principled while tactically flexible through a keen awareness of the resources that come from the community's history, people, practices and products. Changes in attitude, insights, and motivations are necessary to harness the potentials of this kind of environment. However, a significant aspect would be the capability to recognize and make use of new and emerging viable tools for community

development. Tools such as the community's networking capability, the extent and productivity of its cultural tradition, the quality of its governance, and ecological awareness are relevant to creative community development efforts. An efficient utilization of these tools could result in a transformation that will have a strong influence in the establishment of an innovative community.

Whether developed or developing, countries can have projects that could be noteworthy in their own way. However, this can be achieved through an evaluation of the distinctive local cultural practices, indigenous resources and community conditions and then crafting and putting to action imaginative responses that is possible or sometimes even seemingly impossible within their situation. This requires not only profound awareness and determination but the courage and commitment to go beyond conventional thinking. A non-conformist, adventurous conviction is vital. If we take the same approach and act as we have always acted then the outcome will just be the same and this is often the cause or what created the problem in the first place. Taking action in usual ways will not tackle current problems.

Even as the world is rapidly changing and a shift in paradigm seems in progress, it is the cultural attributes and attitudes that made many communities great and successful in the past that are more likely to constrain them in the future. So that currently, organizations and communities are venturing to supplant bureaucracy with networks, authority with empowerment and self-responsibility, order with flexibility and creativity, and relentless growth with sustainability. Thus it is imperative to develop a setting that serves as suitable condition within which it is possible to be resourceful, creative and innovative. To generate this milieu entails developing a culture of sustainable development that is intent on tapping the distinctive cultural resources of a community. It will also necessitate overcoming various obstacles pertaining to authority structures because such an environment will impact the way a community is governed, managed and organized.

The task is to develop a culture of creativity that will make it possible to identify, harness, attract, nurture and sustain the talents that will revitalize communities. Such a culture of creativity will make it possible to develop imaginative solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Although lessons have been learned, the main challenge is to find appropriate

responses to emerging problems and opportunities. The goal in adapting to a changing environment is to identify what is distinct about the community and be true to that. The various projects of Khiriwong Community is already showing the way.

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