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**Inclusive Street Management for Street Food Vendors
in Modernizing Bangkok, Thailand**

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Inclusive Street Management for Street Food Vendors in Modernizing Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

1. Background and Rationale

In the modernization process, the economic development increased government capacity for enforcement and upgraded standards, which rationalized urban management towards modernizing society. At the same time, the economic growth created the expansion of disparity and put the pressure to informal sphere to formalize. Bangkok, which is best known internationally as the capital of street food, has been fluctuated in managing the use of public space by street food vendors (SFVs) since the beginning. But recently, the radical formalization approach from a rationalization oriented of urban management was translated into the Policy of Returning Walkways to the Public (PRWP) by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). Thus, it raises the questions: Has the PRWP had adequate approach to vulnerable group or not? How should the government treat street food vendors, as one of urban grassroots economies, in the modernizing society?

The international debate on street vendor issues provides arguments ‘for’, e.g., it is an integral part of economy, source of income and employment for urban poor households/municipal revenue from street space, laboratory for entrepreneurship/ opportunities for everyone to operate their own business, bringing life to dull streets, or flexibility in hours of work (Bromley, 2000; Bhowmik, 2010); and ‘against’, e.g., contributing vehicular and pedestrians’ congestions, presenting unfair-competition due to tax-evasion, or sometimes underground economy and illegal trades (Bromley, 2000); for the government to consider. However, “the accuracy of specific arguments varies enormously according to time, location, type of vending activity, official control, and individuals’ backgrounds and aspirations” (Bromley, 2000). Thus, urban policies and local government practices in developing cities, which mostly concentrate on workplace insecurity, harassment, confiscations, and evictions, needed a legal reform and legitimize street vendor for transparency practice that will benefit to government, vendor, and general public (Roever and Skinner, 2016).

In the national level, Bangkok's contemporary street food vending businesses have been studied by many researchers. International Labor Organization (ILO) confirmed the significance of SFV as an employment generator, and in poverty alleviation, food culture, and economic mobility, but raise concerns about food hygiene, orderliness, and pedestrian safety (ILO, 2006). Street food vending can be a survival strategy for the socially vulnerable, or a training platform for high-skilled SFVs to develop into SMEs (WIEGO, 2014). ILO also commented that the government should recognize the diversity among food vendors and not apply a single policy to all groups (ILO, 2006). Thus, an inclusive development approach is essential to coping with this issue.

There have also been studies of the inclusive concept that conceptualizes it as “growth coupled with equal opportunities, and is consisted of economic, social, and institutional dimensions” (Rauniyar and Kanbur, 2010); inclusive growth that defines the growth as inclusive “if it increases the social opportunity” (World Bank, 2008) with availableness of opportunities and how it was shared among the population (Klasen, 2010); inclusive development is a concept that aims to enable empowerment, build capacity, and help in gaining mastery for all members of a society (Gupta, et al, 2015; Rauniyar and Kanbur, 2010; Adams, 2008; Zhuang and Ifzal, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). However, there has been no study of the policy for SFVs from the viewpoint of inclusive development with an empowerment approach by the government agencies, which will be clarified in this study.

Thus, this study was conducted on "how should the government deal with SFVs in an inclusive manner, under the modernization process?" The findings will fulfill the gap of inclusive development for grassroots economy under modernizing society context with the focusing on street food vending business.

2. Aims and Objectives

There are four main research objectives as follows: (1) To examine the SFVs in the transformation of modernizing society and related government policies in Bangkok, Thailand, what kind of pressure that put on SFVs to transform; (2) To investigate the significance of street food vending business to street food vendor's life, what is the meaning of doing street food vending in modernizing society, in SFVs' point of view; (3) To evaluate the impacts of the radical formalization approach and inclusive development with empowerment approach on SFVs' life and business in an inclusive development's point of view; and (4) To lead policy implications on how the government should treat street food vendors, as one of grassroots economies, in the modernizing society.

Overall, this study aims at clarifying how to adjust and develop street food vendors, with inclusive manner in the modernizing society, by evaluating the policy experience of the Street Food

Program of the Government Savings Bank, while contrasting with the PRWP of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

3. Analytical Framework and Major Surveys

To achieve research objectives, there are five analyses in this study, which conform with four research objectives as follows:

In objective 1, the analysis of the transformation of street food vending in modernizing society, is analyzed through the entire history of street food vending in Thailand. It is an empirical study that contains qualitative analysis of street food vending transformation process in socio-economic aspects by focusing on the changes in street food vending contexts and related government policy contexts to describe the 'lived experience' of phenomena with trading pattern, vendor, and product transformation.

In objective 2: significance of street vending for urban vulnerable in modernizing process, this part will evaluate SFVs' life through socio-economic characteristics of SFVs, and examine the meaning of street food vending to vendors from the viewpoints of urban poor's job opportunity. It will show the current status of SFVs and the significance of street food vending business, and future prospect of street food vending business in the modernizing society.

In objective 3: evaluation of impacts of two opposite approach on street food vending, two analyses are evaluated: (1) Radical formalization from a rationalization oriented urban management, this analysis will examine the impact of the PRWP on SFVs by comparing street food vending businesses before and after the implementation of the PRWP, and evaluate the PRWP from the viewpoints of urban street space management and inclusive development in a modernizing society. (2) Inclusive development with empowerment approach, this analysis will examine the effectiveness of the SFP based on an in-depth study in the Ari area in Bangkok, where the pilot project of the SFP was implemented, and evaluate the impact of the SFP in light of the concept of inclusive development.

In addition, Asian developed economies' experience on street management with street vending will be examined. This analysis is focusing on the street space management by four Asian developed economies, including Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. This is documentary research that aims to analyze on how they utilize street for activity in public space in creating and enhancement a more enjoyable and lively public space, and how Thailand can learn by coping with street management under the similar opportunity to find the success, limitations, and issues.

Then, overall policy implications, this part will integrate all outcomes from previous analyses on "how to adjust and develop street food vending with inclusive manner in the modernizing

society?” and suggestion for all stakeholders, including local authority (BMA), related organization (GSB), SFVs, pedestrians, and the public, to develop an inclusive society.

In order to collect data for this study, three research methods were used, including: (1) questionnaire surveys in Bangkok; (2) In-depth interviews of GSB’s officials and Ari SFVs; and (3) observation and photographing of the changes of street scape in Bangkok. Three major surveys were conducted in Phayathai and Ratchathewi districts, Bangkok between 2018 and 2021, including: (1) a questionnaire survey between July to September 2018 (224 valid responses); (2) a questionnaire survey between July to August 2020 (105 valid responses); and (3) a questionnaire survey between January to February 2021 (239 valid responses). Also, three structural interviews were organized, including: (1) a structural interview with BMA’s officials in January 2019; (2) a structural interview with GSB’s officials in July 2019; and (3) structural interview with food vendors in Chiang Mai and Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya in November 2019.

4. Transformation of Street Food Vending in Modernizing Thailand

Thailand has a long history of street food vending, which has always been associated with the urban development and the government policy. In the modernizing society of Bangkok, the capital and the largest city in Thailand, street food vending became a part of daily urban living, especially in the city where people spend a lot of time outside of their houses. Thus, this chapter aims to examine the SFVs in the transformation of modernizing society and related government policies in Bangkok, Thailand, what kind of pressure that put on SFVs to transform.

There have been five periods of food vending transformation in Bangkok, as follows: (1) the transportation shift from canals to streets due to urban development following western civilization; (2) rapid economic growth, including the expansion of food vending as an informal business under the Public Health Act and cleanliness and Orderliness Act; (3) the new generation, i.e., the influx of white-collar street food vendors who introduced strategic location for operating and value-added food; (4) populist policy, i.e., the expansion of Temporary Permitted Areas (TPAs) in Bangkok and increasing number of SFVs under the economic recovery; and (5) survival, i.e., the changes in the food vending business after the Policy of Returning Walkways to the Public. Through these five periods of transformation, SFVs can adapt to modernization process, socio-economic context and urban development with the changes in the trading pattern, vendor themselves, and their products, while tolerate to the fluctuation of related government policies that reluctantly control or support.

5. Significance of Street Food Vending in Modernizing Society

Since Thailand's economic boom in 1980s to the implementation of the PRWP, street food vending has proved how significance of itself as one of the main labor absorption jobs in Thailand, especially during the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s. Thus, there are variety of SFVs, ranged from young to senior and lower to higher educated SFVs, which shows how inclusive this job are. This chapter aims to investigate the significance of street food vending business to street food vendor's life, what is the meaning of doing street food vending in modernizing society, in SFVs' point of view.

The strongest points of street food vending that attracts these SFVs are: (1) rewarding through daily earning, and (2) freedom of work. It makes SFVs to enjoy the income every day after work, and if they work hard, they can earn more. It also provided the freedom of work to many SFVs to freely adjust their time of operating. However, as majority of SFVs had lower education, thus, they had less job options to choose. But street food vending can generate more income than other jobs that require such low level of knowledge, which made SFVs to choose this job as their occupation.

In general, majority of SFVs are still considered as vulnerable and marginalized people, who are left behind the socio-economic development of the country. But there are still some SFVs who can catch-up with the nation growth and enjoy good earnings from modernization process. Even though, some SFVs are not that poor, but they are still vulnerable, because of business instability, informality, no welfare, no guarantee, and no retirement, i.e., if they didn't work, they won't have any guarantee when they get old.

Even under the PRWP, the significance of street food vending business shows that SFVs are satisfied with the current business itself and hope to continue it, due to its good income generating and freedom/ownership of work. Besides, this job provided a better living standard for many SFVs as "80% of SFVs said that earnings were adequate, confirms the significance of street food vending as a means of livelihood" (ILO, 2006:36), and prevented them from being left behind the national socio-economic development. Thus, it can be seen that street food vending business has contributed to building a more inclusive society, assisting vulnerable and marginalized people to achieve a better quality of life under the modernizing society.

6. Radical Formalization Approach from a Rationalization Oriented Urban Management

As Bangkok is in its modernizing society, there is a tension between control and support street food vendors. This chapter will provide the perspective of control side from the Policy of Returning Walkways to the Public by a local authority or the BMA. The PRWP was originated to canceled all the TPAs in Bangkok, which are the workplace for street vendors. The PRWP had a tremendous negative impact on SFVs in Bangkok, as 70.0% of the registered street vendors were evicted from canceled TPAs. BMA implemented the PRWP differently depending on the targeted area

conditions. There are four different implementations: (1) strict implementation by clearing the main streets; (2) strict implementation by the rearranging street space; (3) strict implementation by both clearing and rearranging main streets and space; and (4) gentler implementation. Thus, this chapter aims to evaluate the impacts of the radical formalization approach on SFVs' life and business in an inclusive development's point of view.

The clearing approach affected SFVs very seriously and caused their 'tri-polarization' based on their business capacities and other attributes as follows: (1) relocating to backstreets/alleys; (2) shifting to private areas if they could pay a relatively high rent; or (3) giving up street vending and changing jobs or retiring. Very few have upgraded to permanent restaurants/ shops or food courts in shopping centers. Yet it is very difficult for most SFVs to find formal jobs with better income, because the majority of them have little education, and are female, middle or senior aged workers. The PRWP achieved formalization of the main streets and returned the walkways to pedestrians, but could not formalize street vending, and forced many to backstreets/alleys, marginalizing them further.

In addition, the characteristics of the survivors and their businesses have changed under the PRWP as their shop style and size changed to be more mobile so as to be more flexible in terms of location, and the food items sold also changed to a more convenient for mobile food vending and require less stall space.

Even under the PRWP, street food vending business remains active in Bangkok, as one-fourth of the SFVs surveyed are newcomers. Most of them were females who came from provincial areas, in particular the northeast, while around one-quarter were from the BMR, with a wide range of ages between 30s and 50s and a low-to-intermediate educational background. Street vending may attract those populations due to the work freedom, lower investment, and better income opportunity compared to other sectors. Thus, the food vending business still provides job opportunities for a population similar to that before the policy was implemented.

7. Inclusive Development with Empowerment Approach for Grassroots Economy

The Street Food Program provided by Thailand's Government Savings Bank supports a grassroots economy for street food vendors and other 'micro' food service providers. It aims to expand GSB's financial business by incorporating the grassroots economy into formal finance, which is beneficial to both the GSB and the micro food vendors. In Thailand, which is rapidly modernizing, supporting the members of the grassroots economy who are at risk of being left behind by economic growth is a socio-economic policy issue, and the SFP's effects are interesting from the perspective of inclusive development. In particular, in Bangkok, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has been implementing the 'Policy of Returning Walkways to the

Public' to abolish Temporary Permitted Areas for street vending on a large scale since 2014, and it is important to confirm the significance of the SFP for inclusive development under such circumstances. Thus, this chapter aims to evaluate the impact of inclusive development with empowerment approach on SFVs' life and business in an inclusive development's point of view.

The SFP has three basic programs of loans, knowledge development, and an online payment system. A total of 19,918 SFVs across the country have used the SFP in the three years 2017–2019, representing 19.3% of all SFVs nationwide. The PRWP has discouraged SFVs in Bangkok from participating in the SFP, and the participation rate in Bangkok (13.5%) is lower than the national average. Compared to the use of loan program and online payment system, participation in seminars is somewhat lower.

It became clear that each of the three SFP programs received a certain level of appreciation from the participating SFVs. In the pilot project area, strong encouragement from the GSB led many SFVs to participate in a wide range of programs. The majority (91.4%) of the SFVs indicated that they were able to achieve their participation objectives in terms of ensuring business continuity, raising funds for their business or livelihood, acquiring business-related knowledge and certification, increasing sales through the introduction of the online payment system, and creating a unified food street. In contrast, in the ordinary area, participation in the SFP was almost solely the use of the online payment system, but 43.5% of the survey respondents reported that their participation resulted in increased sales, mainly due to the linkage with the online ordering application. The usefulness of the SFP program was found to depend on the attributes of the SFVs: the SFP approach tended to be used relatively more by SFVs with a secondary education or higher and by those in their 50s or younger with a more ambitious business outlook. The program is not being used by SFVs with less ambitious business prospects, characterized by older age or lower education.

The concept of inclusive development emphasizes the empowerment of the socially vulnerable. The SFP's loan system can be used not only as business capital but also as living capital, contributing to the inclusive development goal of 'gaining mastery over one's affairs.' The SFP's knowledge development (seminars), loan program, and online payment system have enhanced the goal of 'gaining mastery over one's affairs' in business and the 'power to benefit from new opportunities' for aspiring SFVs. Access to loans also led to self-awareness of 'gaining social trust' and contributed to 'power from self-esteem.' Moreover, knowledge acquisition due to SFP participation has led to self-confidence in one's work among the street food vendors, which contributes to their 'power from self-esteem.'

The analysis of how participation in SFP has affected the SFVs' self-perceptions of social inclusiveness revealed that SFP participants were (1) more positive about the future prospects of

their business and prouder of their work, and (2) more likely to rate their quality of life positively; in addition (3) a lower percentage of respondents perceived themselves to be 'left behind by economic growth' or 'socially excluded.' From the above findings, it can be concluded that the SFP has a certain usefulness as an inclusive development approach to SFVs.

8. Asian Developed Economies' Experiences: Street Management with SFVs in Modernizing Society

In the modernization process, SFVs have been under controlled by the government with a different approach. This chapter is an international comparative study of the policies on SFVs and street management that regulate and adjust to modernizing society in four Asian developed economies: Japan, Singapore, Korea, and Taiwan. It shows that SFVs' formalization process should be along with work options. It focuses on the street and public space management by four Asian developed economies that aims to analyze on how they utilize street for activity in public space in creating and enhancement a more enjoyable and lively public space and to get the lessons learned in coping with street management under the similar opportunity to find the success, limitations, and issues.

There are three main mechanisms in managing the street to be inclusive, which are (1) process of license, (2) designated areas, and (3) management tools. In all case study, process of license played a key role as the basis for both control and support decisions. Vendor license provided real name registered system that help giving the rights in operation, controlling the number of street vendors, tracing tax payment, and preventing sublet. In Japan and Singapore, the process of license occurred one-time during the developing stage of the country. Especially in Japan, even some local municipalities tried to recruited new street vendors for revitalizing street activities, it was still formidable under the strict Road Law. Nevertheless, Taiwan and Korea were more relieved. Even though, they stopped licensing during the high economic stage, but they prepared for newcomers in the developed stage and occasionally welcomed newcomers to their designated areas.

For the designated area, it is an alternate places or work options for street food vendors after licensed. Designated areas assisted in standardizing hygienic problems by providing electricity, gas, dining area, public toilet, sewer and drainage system. It also prevented traffic problems as street food vendors were relocated to places that were prepared for operating, not public space or street. Most of the cases were relocated such as; Japan provided underground mall for street vendors to move in; Korea put licensed vendors together in many popular walking streets; Singapore constructed Hawker Centre throughout the country and relocated street food vendors there. While, Taiwan is more inclusive as it did both legalized the same areas and relocated to

designated areas. Thus, all of it created the modern image of street food vendors to the public and helped in blended street food vendors into city development later.

After licensed and relocated to designated areas, the management process is very important as it the one that reflects how effective of the policy. As street food vendors had already been recognized and protected by laws after licensed, the basic in managing street food vendor designated areas included: monthly inspections, area cleaning, price control, and operation time control. Moreover, the future decisions of the government were translated into management tools as many countries tried to developed street food vendors as tourist destinations. Especially in Singapore that had successfully promoted street food as culinary tourism and become a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2020. Korea and Taiwan heavily promoted food tourism after standardized their designated areas. While, Japan managed to revitalize street activity through street food vendors. All these evidences proved that street food vendors had been embedding to city development and included in the government's plan and policy in many developed countries.

9. Conclusion

Overall, this study fulfills the gap of inclusive development with empowerment approach under the modernizing society, which focusing on SFVs, as follows:

SFVs in modernizing society

In the modernizing society of Thailand, there are five periods of socio-economic context transformation, including: (1) the transportation shift from canals to streets, which canals were abandoned in favor of roads, and changed to land-based activity; (2) rapid economic growth caused a huge wave of migrant workers to Bangkok, and food vending has become informal business since then; (3) Asian financial crisis caused the white-collar workers to join the street trade and proved how significance of street food vending business as urban poor's job opportunity and labor absorptions; (4) the populist policy and economic recovery changed government's view on SFVs from control to support and increased number of TPAs; and (5) the PRWP, a radical formalization approach that caused a tremendous decline on SFVs' number, who were evicted from canceled TPAs. However, SFVs can adapt to the socio-economic context and urban development of modernization process, while tolerate to the fluctuation of related government policies that reluctantly control or support them.

Significance of street (food) vending opportunity for vulnerable

Street food vending has proved how significance and inclusive of itself as the source of income for urban poor and one of the main labor absorption jobs in Thailand with various types of SFVs, ranged from young to senior and lower to higher educated SFVs. It makes SFVs to enjoy more income than other jobs with the same level of knowledge for SFVs with lower education and less

job options to choose. Generally, majority of SFVs are still considered as vulnerable and marginalized people, who are left behind the socio-economic development of the country. Even though, there are some SFVs who can catch-up with the nation growth and enjoy good earnings, but they are still vulnerable, because of business instability, informality, and no social welfare to guarantee their life when they get old.

Even under the PRWP, the significance of street food vending business shows that SFVs are satisfied with the current business itself and hope to continue it, due to its good income generating and freedom/ownership of work. Besides, this job provided a better living standard for many SFVs and prevented them from being left behind the national socio-economic development. Thus, it can be seen that street food vending business has contributed to building a more inclusive society, assisting vulnerable and marginalized people to achieve a better quality of life under the modernizing society.

Inclusive street management

First of all, the perspective of the ‘inclusive street management’ is a contradiction between the ‘legitimacy of public space occupation’ and the ‘securing workplace for socially vulnerable’. In this study, the two opposite approaches play significant roles in controlling and supporting SFVs. The radical formalization approach or the PRWP has a clearing approach that negatively affects to SFVs’ life and business as it aims to canceled their workplace in the TPAs. While, another approach is the inclusive development with an empowerment approach or the Government Savings Bank Street Food Program. This approach assists SFVs in developing their business through financial support, knowledge support, and online payment system. In managing streets and walkways with variety of street vendors, it is important to consider the following four points: (1) Taking into account the livelihood of socially vulnerable street vendors; (2) Securing walking and transportation space; (3) Development and maintenance of a vibrant street life and street food culture; and (4) Securing the legitimacy of public space occupancy. Moreover, from the lessons learned of Asian developed economies’ experience in street management, there are three mechanisms in managing the street to be inclusive, which are (1) process of license, (2) designated areas, and (3) management tools.

Inclusive development for SFVs in modernizing Bangkok

In Thailand’s modernizing society context, inclusive street management is not enough for street food vending management. In the inclusive manner, not only securing work space, but also empowering socially vulnerable through financial and knowledge support in order to create a platform for development in the modernization process, in this study, the Street Food Program by the Government Savings Bank.

In the view of street management with the PRWP, the clearing approach should be used carefully, while the rearranging of streets should have increased implementation, as it is more inclusive due to ensuring the same workplace for SFVs, with guidelines for keeping the streets clean and convenient for pedestrians. For ambitious SFVs, street vending could be a stepping stone to a formal/permanent business. The government sectors are expected to establish a platform to support them by providing secured temporary business places, loans, and knowledge-development programs, like the Street Food Program of the GSB.

Towards inclusive and lively street and inclusive society

The current status of SFVs shows how significance of street food vending business to these vulnerable and marginalized people. There are many SFVs who want to continue their small-scale street food vending business at their own pace. For these SFVs, the assurance of business continuity (rather than the SFP) is of utmost importance. In particular, in Bangkok, where the PRWP is being implemented, the question of how to guarantee business opportunities for SFVs has become an important policy issue from the perspective of inclusive development. The pilot project in Ari, Bangkok is one of the cases that suggests how street food vending businesses can be organized and supported.

In the prospect of street food vending business, SFVs should be supported in their development process, and included in the formalization to be part of modern society under the wise management of streets and public spaces by local authorities balancing the need for smooth pedestrian traffic, with strengthening of lively streets with street food culture, and ensuring economic opportunity for vulnerable groups. Similar projects to the SFP will ensure not only business opportunities for SFVs but also create better business environments and lively food streets, which are part of inclusive development.

Keywords: empowerment, grassroots economy, inclusive development, modernization, transformation, street food vending