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Multi-level structural equation modeling for city development based on the expectations of the local population in a special border economic zone in Western Thailand

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ABSTRACT

In response to the opening of ASEAN and the creation of special border economic zones throughout the ASEAN community, research into the expectations of the local population in such areas is necessary to establish the most efficient policy implementation for Thailand. Employing a mixed methodology, this research assembled a multi-level structural equation model based on a total sample size of 540 people living in 120 local communities. Multi-level structural equation modeling in the Mplus 7.3 software was used for data analysis. The results showed that policy awareness did not have a direct effect on city development expectations, but had indirect effects on public participation and special border economic zone management. Therefore, people in the local community must be approached for successful management and policy implementation in the regional and urban districts of special border economic zones, as was found in this study. Further, the public sector must conduct policy implementation by persuading people in the local area to contribute so that the goal of effective policy for the special border economic zones can be achieved.

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Introduction

The improvement of special border economic zones for urban communities in different nations adds to monetary advancement of the nation in general, as was found in Laredo, Texas. Laredo assumed an essential role as an international trade gateway, which extended and encouraged a proficient special economic zone. China also has an effective exceptional financial zone in Shenzhen. It is the biggest and most vital locale for financial improvement and worldwide exchange in China. Malaysia has a special

economic zone in Iskandar, a region close to Singapore, in order to bolster the universal exchange and venture that would happen from the opening of the ASEAN Economic Community (Tangyongtrakul, 2013; Texas Department of Transportation [TXDOT], 2003; Trevino, 1996). Even though some analysis has demonstrated that city development of a special economic zone has decidedly influenced financial improvement in East Asian nations, such achievement may not be consistently expected for nations in other regions (Kaewmanee, 2013; World Bank [WB], 2008).

The opening of the ASEAN community offers Thailand a strategic advantage primarily because of its central location in the ASEAN region and its capacity to act as a crucial link for the ASEAN region with the rest of the world. In 2013,

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regulations were created and implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister for special economic development zones in order to encourage international trade and investment. This act was motivated by Thailand's influential position for the connection of transportation and commerce between ASEAN partners in the region. Based on the ASEAN cooperation framework and additional economic agreements, it also aimed at becoming a free trade agreement and increasing international commerce across borders between Thailand and its neighbors ([Office of the Prime Minister \[OPM\], 2013](#)). As a result of its location on the western border with Myanmar, Kanchanaburi province was expected to become a significant international shipping route for future trade ([Ponsaram, Malison, & Sittilert, 2014](#)).

Issues concerning city development of a special border economic zone in Kanchanaburi province have been raised by previous researchers. Most were concerned with other institutions and attached to other institutional levels differently. For local development planning, the opinions of stakeholders in the area have not been collected. Accordingly, such opinions should be assessed and organized with related institutions for developmental groundwork and eventual execution to promote understanding by the people and stakeholders as well as offer exchanges for increased civic commitment. The economic and area politics between Thailand and Myanmar have enhanced industry in Thailand, from the central region to the border. However, it has also created deficiencies in the laws and directives aimed at controlling disparity in the border regions of both nations. Thus, citizen participation and civil rights must be included in the focus of regional border development policy. Likewise, related policy making should be enhanced, such as in the case of the border region along Tak province. At the same time, some suggest that citizens need to play a larger role in policy making and demand more from policy aimed at investment development. A special border economic zone regional institution should also be created. Government support, the function of state bodies, legal revisions, political turmoil, administration, area capacity, and public participation must be considered to achieve these goals ([Piyachot, 2011](#); [Pongsawat, 2007](#)).

Because of a range of relevant factors, effective policy implementation has been very difficult for city development of special border economic zones by government agencies. As such, any devised policy must work in conjunction with the management of special border economic zone design under the most favorable public condition in the area. In addition, the development of model assumptions, also called multi-level structural equation modeling, was addressed by this research utilizing the expectations of citizens at the individual and community level for the city development of special border economic zones. This modeling approach was utilized as a means of detailing the underlying model and the results of its creation. Put simply, the study of public opinion in local areas can dictate the achievement of city development for a country on a macroeconomic level for economic development, stability, regulation, and impartiality.

Literature Review

A hypothesis model using multi-level structural equation modeling for city development expectations of a special border economic zone in Western Thailand was created by the researcher for individual and community level data synthesis. The units of examination for the individual level merged into bigger units at the community level and derived the basic data link contributing to the structure in sliding order. This was because no research study exists for state sector management, including cross-sectional studies of policy formation for economic and social development, also termed multi-level data structure. A type of model likeness can be gleaned by the relation between upper and lower variables. In a phenomenon called Mirror Effects, the upper variable makes the model status and replicates the lower variable ([Kanchanawasi, 2007](#)).

Components of city development expectations in special border economic zones: Physical, Environmental, Economic, Social, and management indicators have previously been found by a synthesis of intellectual concepts to be inclusive in city development expectation (CDE) ([Office of National Economic and Social Development Board \[NESDB\], 2011](#); [Pradpreud, 2012](#); [World Health Organization \[WHO\], 2007](#)). It has been found that the causal factor relating to multi-level factors affecting city development expectation (CDE) for special border economic zones is consistent at both the individual and community levels. Two levels for the group of variables in the research of [Tochot, Chanpeng, and Meemak \(2012\)](#) were similar to this case following multi-level causal factors. In this study, the multi-level causal factors were divided into three groups:

- 1) Special border economic zone management (SEZ), comprised of the indicators Location, Economic Activities, Management, and Rights Privilege, was included in the first group ([Knoth, 2000](#); [Krainara, 2008](#); [NESDB, 2011](#)).
- 2) Public participation (PP), comprised of the indicators Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower, comprised the second group ([Burikul, 2008](#); [International Association for Public Participation \[IAP\], 2014](#); [Kokpon, 2013](#); [Sopchokchai, 2007](#)).
- 3) Policy awareness (PA), as applied from the concept of [Kingdon \(2003\)](#) and consisting of the indicators Political Stream, Problem Stream, and Policy Stream, comprised the third group.

Understanding of the causal factors affecting city development expectation (CDE) at both the individual and community level for special border economic zones in Western Thailand, namely, policy awareness (PA), public participation (PP) and special border economic zone management (SEZ), is brought about through the development of a multi-level structural equation model. As such, development plans and regional management systems in the state sector may be influenced. Additionally, regional

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