

Building Social Capital through Social Space for People Living in Poverty: A Case Study of Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise, Phatthalung

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Received	: 06/05/2025
Revised	: 16/06/2025
Accepted	: 19/06/2025

Abstract

Social capital is a critical factor in enhancing opportunities and reducing inequality among disadvantaged populations. This study explores the transformation of a shared physical space into a social space to strengthen social capital within the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise. Employing a participatory action research (PAR) approach, the research facilitated the development of a social space through methods such as participatory meetings, workshops, demonstrations, and focus group discussions. The target group comprised 150 vulnerable households in Phanang Tung and Thale Noi subdistricts, Khuan Khanun district, Phatthalung province. The findings reveal two key insights: (1) Social space formation among members emerged from spatial relationships within the Lenoï Craft family network, consisting of groups such as those with storefronts, those selling unfinished sedge bag, and those processing finished sedge products. Situated within the socio-ecological landscape of mountains, forests, rice fields, and wetlands, these groups leveraged spatial connections to express local identity, revitalizing sedge handicrafts with renewed cultural value. (2) The transformation of a public area into a social space for the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise was driven by user-designed activities that integrated local knowledge with social capital-building processes, thereby supporting the development of human, economic, and natural capital within the community.

Keywords: Community Space, Social Capital, Community Enterprise, Poverty Alleviation

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Introduction

Poverty alleviation is recognized as one of the top priorities in the global agenda for sustainable development (SDGs) (Ipsos, 2021). Despite various efforts, poverty remains a persistent challenge in many ASEAN countries, including Thailand (Mukhlis et al., 2021). In particular, combating poverty has been a longstanding and ongoing challenge for Thailand (Khamken et al., 2021; Krongkaew et al., 1992; Sittha, 2012). In response, the Thai government has placed strong emphasis on addressing poverty and income inequality by incorporating these issues as key pillars within the 20-Year National Strategy (2018 to 2037). Efforts to alleviate poverty in Thailand have been pursued through a multidimensional approach that encompasses the economic, social, health, and educational sectors, with several key ministries taking the lead (Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council, 2020). In response to such multidimensional concept, the term of poverty, defined by Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A), is constructed into five inter-related dimensions: financial capital, human capital, social capital, natural resource capital, and infrastructure capital (Sriprom, 2021).

Phatthalung Province in southern Thailand continues to experience high poverty rates (Sampantamit et al., 2023). One of its most culturally significant local industries is the traditional craft of “krajood” (tube sedge) weaving, practiced for many generations in Thale Noi and Phanang Tung subdistricts (Kaewsuksaeng, 2021). However, vulnerable groups in these areas, mainly elderly women, face compounded livelihood challenges. According to the Ministry of Higher Education’s PPPConnex database, they suffer from low levels of economic and social capital, lack formal education or market access, and remain heavily reliant on middlemen for sales. The situation is further exacerbated by restricted access to natural resources since the designation of Thale Noi as a non-hunting wildlife sanctuary in 1975 (Supawan, 2024), as well as limited community engagement and weak internal social networks.

To address these challenges, the Leno Craft Community Enterprise was established, providing a shared physical space intended to serve as an initial form of physical and organizational capital (Aue-aungkul et al., 2023). However, deficits in other forms of capital, particularly social capital, continue to constrain the group’s potential for resilience, innovation, and sustainable development. By fostering social interaction, the enterprise seeks to build trust, shared norms, and stronger internal networks within the shared space. This leads to the research question of how social space can be leveraged to develop social capital in support of a sustainable community enterprise.

The theoretical foundation for this study is grounded in Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the spatial triad, which distinguishes between *conceived space* (planned environments), *perceived space* (routine practices), and *lived space* (emotional and symbolic experiences) (Watkins, 2005). When these elements converge, a social space

emerges, where physical settings become arenas for trust-building, cooperation, and shared meaning (Ilako, 2020). In this context, social capital, defined as the norms, trust, and networks that enable coordinated action (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009; Uphoff & Wijayaratra, 2000), can be strengthened through the deliberate use of social space. Prior research suggests that community enterprises can function as catalysts for social capital, transforming marginalized groups into cohesive, resilient, and economically active communities (Nakudom et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2021).

Grounded in this framework, the present study seeks to transform the physical location of the Lenoir Craft Community Enterprise into a meaningful social space. This process is expected to strengthen social capital among vulnerable community groups while generating additional benefits in terms of economic, human, and physical capital. This study employed a participatory action research (PAR) approach to achieve how physical space can be improved and how such changes might contribute to building stronger social connections and supporting broader well-being. Even though social capital is widely seen as important in community development, the ways in which physical space might help nurture it have rarely been the focus of study, especially in the setting of rural enterprises. In addition, the association between social capital and other forms of capital (e.g., human capital, economic capital) remains underexplored in previous research. Ultimately, the project aspires to establish Lenoir Craft Community Enterprise as a sustainable social space that members are motivated to maintain and develop over time. The insights gained from this case would offer broader policy implications, suggesting that similar community-based models can be adapted to other rural contexts in Thailand and across ASEAN to support inclusive, area-based poverty alleviation strategies.

Objective

This study aims to transform the Lenoir Craft Community Enterprise into a meaningful social space by fostering social capital, measured through increased trust, participation, and internal collaboration to support sustainable community enterprise development.

Literature review

Social Space

Space is a concept that can be understood in many different ways as physical, social, mental, or symbolic. One of the most influential and socially grounded views of space comes from the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (Watkins, 2005). The concept explains that space is not just a backdrop for human activity, but something actively shaped by and shaping social life. Lefebvre introduced the idea that space has three interrelated dimensions. The first is *representations of space* (conceived space), which

refers to how physical space is planned or designed by experts like architects, city planners. The second is *spatial practices* (perceived space), which is how space is actually used in everyday life, for example, how people move through it, interact, and perform routine activities. The third is *spaces of representation* (lived space), which relates to the emotional and symbolic meanings people attach to places, including memories, experiences, and cultural symbols. Together, these three types of space help us see how space is both created by and reflective of social life, especially in organisations and communities. Although, Lefebvre space concept was initiated from urban space, it can also be applied in the organizational space (Ilako, 2020).

The given concept of space can be understood as social space, shaped through the dynamic interplay of conceived space (physical design and planned features), perceived space (people's behaviors, usage patterns, and preferences), and lived space (personal experiences, emotional responses, and social meanings) (Ilako, 2020). Within this framework, spatial space plays a vital role in shaping social capital, as geographic proximity and place-based interactions foster trust, strengthen social networks, and influence their formation, quality, and reach (Foster et al., 2015). Empirical findings further support this connection, showing that the use of public spaces by residents can enhance social capital and, in turn, lead to increased income (Su et al., 2024). These insights underscore the transformative potential of spatial environments, not merely as physical settings, but as active agents in fostering social cohesion, economic opportunity, and community well-being.

Social Capital and Spatial Dynamics

Capital can be viewed as an asset that produces particular income flows, referred to as streams of benefit, according to the framework set in economics (Uphoff & Wijayaratra, 2000). Extending this concept, social capital, a term rooted in sociology and political science, refers to the ways individuals within particular groups cooperate to address shared challenges (Lochner, 1999). In accordance with the economic perspective of capital, social capital is regarded as a communal resource made up of common norms, values, beliefs, trust, social networks, relationships, and institutions that enable cooperation and coordinated efforts for reciprocal advantage (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). Based on numerous studies, social capital is generally seen as a multifaceted concept, typically categorized into various types including structural and cognitive; bonding, bridging, and linking; strong and weak ties; as well as horizontal and vertical forms (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). Consequently, social capital embodies a dynamic and complex resource that facilitates both personal and communal efforts within and between communities

Among the most commonly discussed forms of social capital are structural and cognitive social capital (Uphoff & Wijayaratra, 2000). Structural social capital refers to observable elements, such as networks, associations, and institutions, that enable

collective action through formal linkages among individuals. In contrast, cognitive social capital comprises intangible elements like shared norms, values, and beliefs that guide behavior toward collective goals. Integrating Lefebvre's concept of space, structural social capital can be associated with *conceived space*, which must first be established to facilitate interaction. This gives rise to *perceived space*, formed through routine engagement and spatial practices. Over time, continued interaction within this context contributes to the emergence of *lived space*, embodying internalized meanings and shared understanding,, which are core components of cognitive social capital. This spatial interpretation illustrates how both tangible and intangible forms of social capital are shaped through the physical and experiential dimensions of everyday life. Within such spaces, trust can naturally develop through geographic proximity, as it enables frequent face-to-face interactions and fosters a shared sense of place, ultimately building familiarity, mutual respect, and likeability within local communities (Foster et al., 2015).

Social capital brings substantial benefits at both the community and organizational levels. On a societal scale, it supports community development by fostering civic engagement, mutual trust, and effective collective action (Putnam, 1994). Within local enterprises, particularly community-based businesses, cognitive social capital builds strong internal ties that promote knowledge sharing, leading to enhanced innovation and productivity (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Edelman et al., 2004). Additionally, for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), leveraging social capital through relationships with politicians, community leaders, and other business stakeholders provides access to valuable information, strategic resources, and collaboration opportunities (Acquaah, 2008). Therefore, social capital not only strengthens social cohesion but also drives organizational efficiency and economic success through the strategic use of relationships and shared values.

Community Enterprise as a Catalyst for Social Capital

Residents in marginalized areas typically lack social capital due to limited access to diverse and high-status social contacts, resulting in network homogeneity dominated by low-status ties (Otero et al., 2022). Community enterprise is seen as a platform that supports the enhancement of the social engagement and pursuing a common goal in terms of economic sustainability (Okolie et al., 2021; Suksawas et al., 2023). A community enterprise refers to a local business formed through the cooperation of community members, involving production, services, or other operations. It is carried out by a group of individuals who are closely connected and share a common way of life (Thangthong et al., 2024). It provides the conceived and perceived space seen as the structure form of social capital. When the members work interactively with each other and also with the physical space, the repeated experience can form engagement where shared norm and trust can establish. In contrast, the community enterprise can, in turn, gain an advantage in business operation from the social capital. For example, Community

participation helps reduce operational or development costs, supports the creation of networks to expand market reach, and promotes the application of local wisdom in product development (Nakudom et al., 2020). Ultimately, community enterprises not only foster social capital but also create a sustainable foundation for both social cohesion and economic growth, benefiting all members involved.

Methodology

This study employed a participatory action research (PAR) approach to co-create a sustainable social space within the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise. The research involved three main phases: 1) co-design, 2) community engagement, and 3) reflection. The first phase mainly conducted focus group discussions. Participants were selected purposively to ensure the achievement of the research objectives. For expanding members, community leaders (e.g., village chiefs and subdistrict headman) were selected in the focus group to identify strategies for expanding membership to 150 households, based on the PPPConnex database by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation. For designing engaging activities, small group discussions were conducted on subgroup leaders to identify the opportunities for local people to engage and the enhancement of community enterprise. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes.

The second phase focused on implementing the plans developed during the co-design phase. This involved identifying and recruiting potential members as suggested by the village chiefs and other local leaders. A large community meeting was organized with the participation of newly invited households and existing members to introduce the objectives of the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise and promote shared ownership of the initiative. During this meeting, the goals of fostering social capital and sustainable development through the enterprise were clearly communicated. In addition, a series of planned activities, such as training workshops, skill-sharing sessions, and collaborative product development, were initiated to encourage participation and foster interaction within the shared physical space. These activities were intended not only to build practical skills and economic capacity but also to strengthen bonds among members, thereby contributing to the formation of a meaningful social space.

The third phase focused on reflection and evaluation through in-depth interviews. Key informants including three subgroup leaders were purposively selected to provide insights into the changes observed within the enterprise and the broader community. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of how the shared space and related activities had influenced social interaction, trust-building, and group cohesion. This reflective phase enabled a deeper understanding of the social dynamics within the enterprise and helped assess the extent to which social capital had been strengthened. It also provided an opportunity to critically examine issues related to

power asymmetries, decision-making processes, and the inclusivity of community development efforts. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Results

The Expansion of the Lenoï Craft Family Network

The development of the *Lenoï Craft Family Network* emerged in response to the growing number of members, which expanded from an initial group of 40 individuals to 75, and eventually doubled to 150. This expansion resulted in a wider geographic dispersion of members across various villages within Thale Noi and Phanang Tung subdistricts. Such growth in membership and spatial reach marks a critical initial stage in strengthening social capital, as expanding networks create more opportunities for connection, collaboration, and mutual support.

To coordinate this expanding membership base, two main models of group formation were employed: a horizontal model and a vertical model. The horizontal model emphasizes identifying and fostering leadership potential within the group, drawing from existing members with demonstrated leadership qualities or new members with leadership aptitude. Conversely, the vertical model relies on formally designated local leaders (e.g., village headmen) to take on leadership responsibilities within the group. These two models have materialized into distinct subgroups, including the *Pa Renu group*, the *Pa Maem group*, and groups led by formal local authorities. Each subgroup manages its own internal operations. For example, when product orders are received, group leaders are responsible for distributing assignments to members accordingly. However, a key constraint remains: members have varying levels of weaving skills, requiring a collaborative environment where knowledge and techniques can be shared through peer learning. These subgroups, through their respective social spaces, are collectively woven into the broader *Lenoï Craft Family Network*.

The *Pa Renu group*, in particular, operates a storefront located along the roadside in Ao Chao Village, Thale Noi subdistrict, a location frequented by passing vehicles and travelers. This group currently consists of 15 active members (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 The Pa Renu Group Operates a Physical Storefront

The *Pa Maem* group functions as a contract production unit, capable of working with both semi-processed raw sedge materials and fully finished products. The group includes skilled seamstresses, with a total of 15 members (Figure 2).



Figure 2 The Pa Maem Group Operates as a Subcontracted Production Team

The village headmen group, consisting of elected local leaders such as subdistrict chiefs and village heads, is the largest among the craft network groups. Their primary role is the production of semi-processed sedge materials, which are supplied to middle vendors both within and outside the local area. The group comprises 120 members (Figure 3).

One member of the village headmen group shared that raw sedge materials can be sold at any quantity because there are hundreds of middlemen, including long-time local traders, people who have other primary occupations but also act as middlemen on the side, and middlemen from outside the area. There are two types of sedge purchases: raw sedge and finished products. The purchase prices are determined by the middlemen and depend on factors such as size, height, width, and thickness. The relationship between the middlemen and the sedge weavers is not rigidly defined, as they are not bound to sell to a particular buyer. However, if a middleman has made an advance agreement, the sale will go to that buyer. If someone passing by requests to buy a few pieces, the weaver may sell them and resume weaving later. Some larger middlemen buy from the general public, traveling by motorcycle to place orders, grade the quality of the weaving, and stockpile materials to resell to smaller middlemen.



Figure 3 The Village Headmen Group Focuses on Producing Semi-Processed Sedge Materials for Sale to Middle Vendors

Members of the group, who share a common social and cultural background, have come together to form a network, utilizing the social space as a shared platform for practicing their knowledge, skills, and traditions, as well as expressing their occupational identity. This has contributed to the revival of sedge handicrafts, adding significant value to the craft.

In summary, the recruitment strategies of horizontal and vertical expansion work effectively. In the vertical model, the village chief network helps identify suitable local members quickly, as they know their communities well and people tend to trust the village chiefs, which facilitates participation. In the horizontal model, members within subgroups share stronger bonds and commitments, typically trusting and working well together. This dual structure serves as a promising mechanism for fostering rapid inclusion, strengthening social bonds, and sustaining collective participation across subgroups.

Social Space and Living Capital Enhancement

The creation of a public space in the form of a common area (*conceived space*) has gradually evolved into a *social space* for the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise. Through active participation in various activities (*perceived space*), members have built shared experiences that foster common norms, trust, and beliefs (*lived space*) aimed at achieving their collective goals. This operational process not only strengthens social bonds but also enhances social capital, serving as a stepping stone toward the development of human capital, economic capital, and natural capital. The group's common space is located at the Talaynoi Floating Market in Talaynoi Sub-district, Khuan Khanun District, Phatthalung Province. This conceived space functions as an operational hub, a production site, and a learning center, where members can share weaving skills, exchange knowledge, and participate in practical workshops. The space is also used for

training purposes and for expanding members' knowledge. Additionally, it serves as a learning platform by providing educational institutions, organizations, and the general public to visit and engage in learning exchanges related to sedge weaving, sedge processing, natural sedge dyeing, sewing, semi-automatic fiber extraction, handloom weaving, and a retail space for members' products.

Rather than being a direct result of increases in other forms of capital, the enhancement of social capital aimed at reducing inequality is facilitated through the shared physical space provided for the members of the Lenoir Craft Group. This space serves as a platform for a variety of activities that foster trust, connection, and collaboration within the community. These activities also contribute to broader dimensions of community development:

- *Human capital* is promoted through English language training for elderly communication (Figure 4), weaving pattern workshops (Figure 5), instructor training programs (Figure 6), and the expansion of knowledge related to fiber extraction techniques (Figure 7).
- *Natural capital* is supported through the sustainable use of local resources, such as natural sedge dyeing using indigenous plants, volunteer work in maintaining the group's sedge plantation (Figure 8), and participation in environmentally focused initiatives like TSU Go Green.
- *Financial capital* is strengthened through income-generating activities, including business negotiation matching (Figure 9) and the production and sale of crafts, particularly those created through natural sedge dyeing and fiber extraction processes using krajood.

Together, these efforts not only reinforce social ties but also foster a more holistic and inclusive approach to community resilience and sustainable development.



Figure 4 English Communication Skills Development Activity for the Elderly at the Lenoir Craft Community Operational Center, Held during January–April 2025



Figure 5 Basketry Skill Enhancement Activity (Tissue Box Weaving) at the Lenoï Craft Community Operational Center, Held on October 9, 2024



Figure 6 Lenoï Craft Group Members as Basketry Instructors at the Lenoï Craft Community Operational Center, Held on January 23, 2025



Figure 7 Natural Fiber Extraction from Sedge Activity at the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise Operation Site Held from March 1 to 5, 2025



Figure 8 Volunteer Activity for Sedge Field Maintenance at the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise Sedge Plantation from January 2024 to March 2025



Figure 9 Business Matching Activity Organized by the Phatthalung Provincial Office of Commerce at Dusit Princess Phatthalung Hotel on January 14, 2025

In addition, the enhancement of social capital through the establishment of a communal space under the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise, comprising 150 member households, has led to tangible economic development within the community. Over a four-year period (2021 to 2024), the group generated a total revenue of 1,106,339 baht from product sales, averaging 7,375.59 baht per household for the entire period, or approximately 1,843.90 baht per household per year. Furthermore, value has been added through the use of local resources such as sedge. A 5-rai area has been allocated for sedge cultivation, with an estimated yield of 1,200 bundles valued at approximately 78,000 baht. In the most recent year, efforts have been expanded to include the development of natural sedge fiber through an extraction process. This new activity, initiated in the current year, has already generated 37,500 baht in income from fiber

sales. While modest, the income serves as meaningful supplementary earnings. More importantly, the shared enterprise fosters capacity building, intergenerational learning, and collective identity. Though not immediately transformative, the economic impact holds catalytic potential for long-term resilience and self-reliance.

Finally, we got insight the feeling of local members, including: Pa Suda, the specialist in sewing process; Pa Chom, the specialist in dyeing process; Pa Renu, the team leader who has her own front store. The narratives of Pa Suda, Pa Chom, and Pa Renu reflect a strong sense of pride and belonging to their community group. They feel that the shared space allows them to work together, support one another, and welcome visitors.

Pa Chom mentioned that the group often receives guests, including students and adults, and she earns some income by teaching them. She regularly invites others to join in the group's activities, such as weaving and sharing skills.

Pa Suda shared that the group has a small sewing team with two sewing machines. They divide tasks like designing, cutting, and sewing, and work together at the community space, which is open and convenient for both work and visitors.

Pa Renu emphasized that most group members are elderly, and the group helps them support one another. If someone doesn't have enough materials, others will share so that everyone can keep weaving. She noted that the group's teamwork and support have helped improve their sales and allowed them to recover financially.

Together, their accounts reveal how the community enterprise functions not only as an economic platform but as a social institution, generating social capital, trust, and collective resilience rooted in shared experiences, localized practices, and a common sense of purpose.

In summary, the project shows that engaging people through shared social space is a promising mechanism for building social capital and enhancing human capacity. The presence of a physical space is essential, as it enables face-to-face interaction so that trust, cooperation, and mutual learning would be easier to achieve. Subgroup structures and participatory activities further supported these social bonds. However, challenges such as limited skills among elderly members, physical space constraints, and opportunity costs for low-income participants hindered full inclusion. While social and human capital improved, economic gains remained modest, suggesting that social capital alone may not lead to transformative outcomes without stronger market access or support mechanisms.

Discussion

The research on the creation of a shared space and the enhancement of social capital among the members of the Lenoï Craft Community Enterprise in Khuan Khanun

District, Phatthalung Province, reveals several noteworthy observations, which warrant further discussion.

The results align closely with Lefebvre's theory of social space (as cited in Watkins, 2005), which conceptualizes space not merely as a physical setting, but as an active social construct shaped by the interplay of conceived, perceived, and lived space dimensions. The Lenoï Craft Group's shared physical space functions as a conceived space, intentionally designed to support collaboration and learning. Through regular communal activities such as weaving workshops and environmental conservation, the space evolves into a perceived space where routine engagement fosters trust and cooperation (Ilako, 2020). Eventually, as members internalize shared values and cultural meanings, the space becomes a lived space, deepening social bonds and enhancing cognitive social capital through shared norms and mutual trust (Foster et al., 2015).

This process reinforces both structural and cognitive forms of social capital, as outlined by Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009). Structural social capital is evident in the formal networks and interactions enabled by the physical shared space, while cognitive social capital is reflected in the community's growing sense of solidarity and shared identity (Uphoff & Wijayaratra, 2000). The development of cognitive social capital is further supported by interviews with local members, who described a strong sense of sharing, teamwork, and reciprocal relationships. In addition, this social space fosters the development of human capital (e.g., training and skill-sharing), natural capital (e.g., sustainable sedge use), and financial capital (e.g., income generation), thereby contributing to a multidimensional approach to community resilience.

The role of the community enterprise is particularly notable, as it acts as a catalyst for social engagement and collective economic action (Okolie et al., 2021; Thangthong et al., 2024). As observed in the Lenoï group, the enterprise not only provides conceived and perceived space, but also leverages social capital to reduce costs, expand market access, and integrate local wisdom into production (Nakudom et al., 2020). This reciprocal relationship, where social capital is both a product and a driver of enterprise success, demonstrates the model illustrated by Su et al. (2024), in which spatial environments actively foster economic and social development.

This finding aligns with research on social capital as a driving force in Thai community enterprises, such as the study by Thangthong et al. (2024), which highlights that the success and sustainability of community enterprises depend on the strategic use of social capital to connect members and facilitate activities. Similarly, research by Hemaphan (2019) emphasizes that social capital is crucial for the survival of community enterprises, fostering cooperation, solidarity, and the willingness to work together. This is achieved through relational systems and the participatory learning processes of the members, enhancing self-reliance. Furthermore, the study on social capital as a competitive advantage in community enterprises by Nakudom et al. (2020) concluded

that social capital, such as community involvement, network formation among entrepreneurs, and the application of local knowledge, offers a competitive advantage for community enterprises.

Despite the overall positive outcomes observed, the transformation of the Lenoir Craft Community Enterprise into a meaningful social space faced several challenges and contradictions. First, initial distrust and skepticism among local members hindered full belief in the concept of the community enterprise, although trust and intimacy gradually improved through ongoing engagement with the researchers. Second, the activities could not involve all members due to skill-specific requirements, limited physical space, and members' occasional inability to attend due to health or personal reasons. Third, many local members, particularly the elderly, faced difficulties in learning new skills, which made adopting the new approach challenging. This required the researcher to provide continuous support to ensure standardized operations. Finally, most local members, being low-income earners, were reluctant to participate in activities as this meant lost income. Balancing their financial needs with participation in enterprise activities was a critical challenge. These limitations underscore the need to reassess the notion of "success" in community enterprise development, as despite fostering social cohesion, many members still face low incomes and informal debt, posing a significant barrier to the sustainability of the enterprise. Additionally, the lack of younger members poses a risk to the long-term sustainability of the enterprise, as aging participants may not be able to carry forward the work indefinitely. In this regard, the enterprise must find a balance between financial viability, social engagement, and the involvement of key young people to ensure long-term success.

Suggestion

Research Implication

The findings from this study offer several practical implications for researchers, community enterprises, and policymakers seeking to enhance social capital and cultural sustainability through place-based initiatives. First, researchers and community development practitioners should prioritize the participatory design of shared spaces that reflect local culture and address users' needs to foster social inclusion, intergenerational engagement, and cultural continuity. Second, community enterprises in similar rural or marginalized settings can adopt locally meaningful materials, such as sedge, not only as economic resources but also as tools for relationship building, knowledge transfer, and identity reinforcement. Third, supporting the gradual evolution from informal groups to more formalized organizational structures is essential, with emphasis on governance, collective decision-making, and respect for both horizontal and vertical relationships within the group. Fourth, policymakers are encouraged to recognize community enterprises as platforms for enhancing social capital by promoting

trust, shared norms, and cooperation, particularly in areas with limited access to formal institutions. The development of inclusive public spaces and infrastructure can foster frequent interaction, especially in geographically dispersed.

Future Research

As this study is based on a single case, its generalizability is limited. However, it offers theoretical insight into how participatory design can produce both enabling and constraining forms of social capital. Future research could adopt a comparative approach across different community enterprises to explore how spatial design and social capital interact under varied sociocultural conditions. Additionally, future research should pursue longitudinal studies to examine how community enterprises contribute to the sustainability of living capital, including human, social, economic, and natural capital. Such studies could provide insight into the evolving dynamics of trust, reciprocity, and shared norms, and how these are maintained or transformed as group membership, leadership, and external conditions change. In parallel, comparative research across diverse geographic, cultural, or socio-economic contexts could reveal how different spatial configurations and degrees of local engagement shape the formation and durability of social capital. Understanding these contextual variations would not only contribute to theory but also inform context-sensitive interventions aimed at fostering inclusive community development. Furthermore, research could explore the role of gender, age, and intergenerational collaboration in sustaining social networks and transferring community knowledge, especially in aging or rural populations.

Acknowledgement

The research was supported by funding from the Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A), operating under the National Commission on Science, Research and Innovation Promotion, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation.

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