

THE NEW RURAL AREA PROGRAM IN VIETNAM FROM THE SENSE OF PLACE THEORY PERSPECTIVE: CASE OF QUANG NAM PROVINCE

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Abstract

New Rural Area Program (Nong thon moi) has been being promoted in Vietnam successful certified “standard new rural areas”, following the sustainability direction in rural areas in the world. The overall goal of the central government in Vietnam pictures a new rural area development scheme with environmental sustainability and socio-cultural identity. However, it might not be easy for policy implementation to totally match the initial goal. This paper studies the case of Quang Nam’s reports on new rural area development and finds out that while the middle-term goals of developing rural areas’ infrastructure and reducing poverty are well reached, a long-term goal of building up rural areas’ environment and community for sustainable purposes might not yet be fulfilled. The criteria of new rural area in Vietnam is a top-down ambitious list of every aspect becoming better but the community participation into the program has been limited. Using the results from the case study and applying the “sense of place” theory, the paper recommends an approach of enhancing community’s sensitivity and attachment to their place which, as a result, increases their willingness to protect and develop their place toward economic, socio-cultural and especially environmental sustainability.

Keywords: *New rural area; Sense of place; Sustainable; Community; Vietnam*

Introduction

New Rural Area Program (*Nong thon moi* in Vietnamese) has been a national targeted program launched by Vietnamese government. The program is supported via its own website nongthonmoi.gov.vn, an Facebook account <https://www.facebook.com/nongthonmoitw> with Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development as the administrator, a specialized website on environment of rural area <http://moitruong.nongthonmoi.gov.vn> and a sub-program “One community, one Product” (in short OCOP). The program has a strong focus on environmental sustainability. The program is marked with 3289 communes certified as “standard new rural areas” (“*nong thon kieu mau*” in Vietnamese) and hundreds of articles submitted to the national press contest praising them. The cases are usually associated with increasing income, poverty reduction and new infrastructure including roads and schools.

Investigation and inspection have been used usually to ensure disciplines for leaders and people in rural areas to follow the regulations under the program. The program also awards

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projects which support the environment such as cleaning the village, establishing shared village farm and gathering garbage while deeper environment-friendly innovation such as growing crops with less chemicals, starting organic agriculture projects and using bio materials in businesses have been fewer. A research study to evaluate if this direction is sustainable, especially in term of environment and inclusiveness is needed. Using the “sense of place” theory, this paper analyses the case of Quang Nam province’s reports on their program of new rural area to test the hypothesis if new rural areas in the program lack incentives to enhance people’s attachment to their places which could affects sustainability.

New Rural Area

Although urban and rural are used commonly in policy documents and in public, they are not yet clearly clarified academically: “[They are] two terms [that] are readily understood by the general public, but a clear definition at the international level has remained elusive. For example, the UN publishes data on cities, urban areas and rural areas, but relies almost entirely on national definitions of these areas. The UN principles and recommendations state that due to different characteristics of urban and rural areas across the globe, a global definition is not possible” [1].

The definition of new rural area is even more complicated than rural area when adding the subjective term “new”, which can be understood differently by various governments and policy makers. While rural area has been always existing in all national planning literature, new rural area does not have a long history. It is a concept of this era with a focus on sustainability and inclusiveness instead of simple economic growth.

The root of new rural area is when rural area started to be considered with separated development policy. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2006 “for the first time, ...proposed a conceptual framework positioning rural policy as an investment strategy promoting competitiveness in rural areas [which] was a radical change from the typical subsidy programs aimed at specific sectors” [2]. The most noticeable change from old to new paradigm is the main tools moving from subsidies to investment. With this change in the attitude to the development of rural area, opportunities and competitiveness of rural areas have been well recognized.

In Vietnam, rural area has been considered an important content since early stage of development because of its large contribution in total employment and share of GDP in agriculture. Rural area has been considered as important as the root of the economy since early years after independence, as stated in the Report “Directions, Tasks and Key Socio-Economic Objectives of the Five-Year Plan 1976-1980” [3] of Central Party of Vietnam (here after CPV). In 1981 and 1982, rural area maintained its important role, as stated in Resolution 41-NQ/TW dated 28/12/1981 at the 11th Meeting of the Central Committee IV of CPV, on “The Socio-Economics Direction and Missions’ in 1982 [4] and the Resolution 06-NQ/TW dated 10/12/1982 at the 3rd Meeting of the Central Committee V of CPV on “The Socio-economics Direction and Missions in 1983 and Targets towards 1985” [5].

After *Doi moi* 1986 (Innovation), rural area in Vietnam continued to be one of pillars of the nation’s innovation scheme which focused on *economic development* in the Resolution 02-NQ/HNTW dated 04/12/1991 on the “Tasks and Solutions to Stabilize and Develop the Society and Economy for the Period of 1992-1995” [6] and the Resolution 05-NQ/HNTW dated 10/6/1993 on “Continuing the Innovation and Socio-Economic Development of Rural Areas’ [7].

After joining World Trade Organization in 1995, rural area and agriculture stepped into a new phase of *industrialization and modernization*, especially in infrastructure and agriculture equipments, as mentioned in the Resolution 15-NQ/TW dated 18/03/2002 on “Accelerating Agriculture and Rural Area *Industrialization and Modernization* for the Period 2001-2010” [8].

This was followed by the Decision 68/2002/QĐ-TTg dated 04/6/2002 on Action Plan to Realize the Resolution on Accelerating Agriculture and Rural Area *Industrialization and Modernization* for the Period 2001-2010 [9].

In 2008, agriculture, farmers and rural area have been considered to have *national strategic roles* in the Resolution 26-NQ/TW dated 05/8/2008 “Agriculture, Farmers and Rural Areas”. In this resolution, rural areas have *comprehensive functions* of improving the environment and life of farmers with *modern, high-productivity and research-based agriculture, typical culture and active participation* into the development process of the rural areas [10].

At the same time, other central government’s documents continued to highlight the policies on improving *living standard, infrastructure and income* for people for rural areas. The Socio-Economic Development Program for Extremely Difficult Communes in Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas (P135II) approved by the Decision 07/2006/QĐ-TTg dated 10/01/2006 [11] was to improve basic infrastructure including roads and clinics as well as living standard of people in remoted area. The Program was evaluated as to be most successful and effective in infrastructure by United Nations (UN) [12]. National Target Program for Poverty Reduction 2006 - 2010 which was approved by the Decision 20/2007/QĐ-TTg on 05/02/2007 [13] was evaluated by UN [14] to be a duplication of P135II despite its contribution in poverty reduction. The Rapid and Sustainable Poverty Reduction Program for the 61 Poorest Districts was regulated by the Resolution 30a/2008/NQ-CP dated 27/12/2008 were to create jobs, provide loans and increase income [15]. Support for access to *land, housing and access to water* was strongly emphasized in the Decision 134/2004/QĐ-TTg dated 20/7/2004 on “Supporting Production and Residential Land and Water for Ethnic Households with Poverty and Difficulty” [16]. The Decision was emphasized by the Prime Minister in the Official Dispatch 1401/CP-NN on “Implementing the Decision 134/2004/QĐ-TTg” [17] with a requirement of two-year timeline of the support to the ethnic people. The overall goal of this period was to improve infrastructure and living standard in rural areas. The government was eager to reduce poverty and paid attention to the most vulnerable people.

Despite of *such an important role* in the national strategy and policies since 1970s, the definition of rural area of Vietnam was *only indirectly clarified* that “rural area is non-urban area” in Article 1 of the Circular 54/2009/TT-BNNPTNT dated 21/8/2009 by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) [18]. However, this circular *was invalidated* on 13/8/2018 by Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development so that the new circular 05/2017/TT-BNNPTNT dated 15/4/2017 “Guiding the Implementation of New Rural Area for the New Period 2016-2020” could be issued, which has no definition of rural area [19]. Therefore, this definition has to rely on the Resolution 1210/2016/UBTVQH13 dated 07/5/2018 on “Urban Area Classification” [20], in which the lowest type of urban area has non-agriculture labor of at least 55% and minimum population of 4,000 people. It is implied that rural area in Vietnam is considered to have *agriculture as major sector and low population density*. Obviously, this definition shows the difficulty of identifying rural area itself. So, to know what rural area is, it is compulsory to look at what is urban area.

In Vietnam, the new rural area development is a higher step to achieve rapid development toward *sustainability economically, socially and especially environmentally*. The Vietnamese central government claims that they want the rural areas not to just survive but to develop. The Resolution 24/2008/NQ-CP dated 28/10/2008 on “The Promulgation of the Government’s Action Program on the implementation of the Resolution of the 7th Meeting of the Central Committee X on Agriculture, Farmers and Rural area” shows the mission of new rural area program as “developing and organizing the rural population’s life towards civilization and modernization, *while preserving cultural identity and ecology in association with the*

development of cities and towns” [21]. This goal makes rural areas’ responsibility even more comprehensive and complex than urban areas’ because it preserves the larger percentage of environment and ecosystems of the whole nations. The environment is not simply up to common standard but supports *the traditional culture and lifestyle* of the rural areas. The most fundamental regulation on new rural area that reflects the ideology of that resolution is the Decision 491-QD/TTg dated 16/4/2009 (here after Decision 491) on “The Promulgation of the Set of National Criteria for *New Rural Area*” [22]. Later, this list of criteria has been added with using technology in rural area administration and gender equality in Decision 342/QD-TTg dated 20/02/2013 on “The Amendment of Some Criteria in the Set of National Criteria for New Rural Areas” [23]. The Decision 1600/QD-TTg dated 16/8/2016 on “Approving the National Target Program of New Rural Area until 2016-2020” [24] has more criteria on medical care, education and pollution treatment in handicraft villages. The Decision 1760/QD-TTg dated 10/11/2017 Amending and Complementing the Decision 1600/QD-TTg emphasizes high technology in agriculture, restricts pollution in handicraft villages to a higher level and promote resources mobilization [25]. The Decision 491 is the foundation that helps quantify what “new rural area” is into specific criteria. The main points of the Decision 491 and those revising it could be summarized into two main points: *top-down policy to build up new rural areas and model-type new rural areas with specific infrastructure listed in the Decision 491*.

Sense of Place

General public may think of a location when talking about a place. However, a lot of research studies have proven that to be a place where people claim they belong to, it has to be much more connected to the community living there. T. Cresswell [26] distinguished location and place by identifying that “location refers to an *absolute point* in space with a specific set of coordinates and measurable distances from other locations [so] location [only] refers to the ‘*where*’ of place”.

Sense of place could be established partly from *architectural characteristics* of a location [27]. However, it is the architecture that support the feelings of wanting to be better of people. Some examples can be design of large and convenient sidewalks with big green areas, friendly to the environment and flowers being viewed as good for health and shared activities.

Sense of place could also be generated through *history* [28]. Discrete historical events, as well as the historical evolution of cultural norms and values, economic organization, and technologies, help shape places.

A comprehensive description of sense of place claims that it describes our relationship with places, expressed in different dimensions of human life including emotions, biographies, imagination, stories, and personal experiences [29]. With this description, humans could build up their sense through proud, happy or satisfied *feelings* with living conditions, legal regulations and policies of the community, admiration toward magnificent architecture, meaningful culture, opportunities to have positive experiences.

In summary, sense of place includes these following components: (i) *The physical features of place*: the environment, for example, the purity, preserved rivers, streams, forests, gardens, species of plants and herbs, the architecture for example, the construction style, the ratio of green area, the density of construction and entertainment area; (ii) *The socio-cultural features of place*: historical places and stories of the place, traditional agriculture products, cultural activities and related infrastructure including shared places and facilities for people interaction to support these activities; (iii) *The experiences of the community* toward the place: the pride of citizens about the place, the feeling of being secure to be a member there or being enjoyable to live there, being willing to protect their environment and develop their place toward sustainability.

Sense of Place in Planning towards Conservation of Places

“Sense of place” has been applied to *planning* of both urban and rural areas in the world in both master planning theory and specific case studies.

N. Heynen, M. Kaika and E. Swyngedouw [30] claimed that “sense of place” in the city generates an added set of situations and challenges, including dynamic demographics, migration narratives, and complex infrastructure networks, as well as contested definitions of natural environments because cities have continuous changes.

Sense of place is also researched and considered by policy makers in the process of *urbanizing rural areas* which affects rural landscapes and as a result, affect the feelings of the people facing the threats on their home environment [31].

“Sense of place” could work as a policy tool for the government to have some *pilot projects of urban cities* as the theory can support the conceptualization and *design of urban living labs* [32].

Another application of the theory to planning is to increase public participation in protecting the place which serves planning goals. The theory can be utilized to increase community’s willingness to contribute to the area and community’s sensitivity to place, leading to place-protective behaviors [33]. Sense of place has been proven to increase attention, participation and enthusiasm of community to pro-environment activities, for example, enhancing people’s sense of bonding with their place by environmental learning initiatives so that they learn about global environment changes at their local level and contribute to environment protection globally through daily actions. [34]. This is a good strategy to make the community protect the achievements of development programs sustainably. Sense of place have been also used in successful cases of developing residential areas in cities creatively. *P. Teo and S. Shuang* [35] analyzed the changes in the construction design by the Housing and Development Board (HDB) of Singapore to prove the importance of sense of place. From very similar features among all constructions, the public housing in Singapore changed to broad variety in motifs, dormers and colors so that residents have *a sense of identity* with their own focus of activities. Public houses contain facilities such as courtyards, walkways and pavilions which are areas for interaction among people living there so the residents communicate better and to develop a sense of bonding and belonging.

Viet Dung Nguyen [36] considered sense of place an approach for *tourism planning* in Vietnam because people travel to enjoy the differences not the same things in all tourist places. This view explains that sense of place should be well integrated in planning to ensure economic growth of places developing tourism services.

Sense of place in *rural area planning* increases sense of place in community so that they can contribute more to their places. *N. Smith* [37] conducted a content analysis of public comments in the case study of Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta from various planning processes since 2000 and interviews with “place” representatives to understand the current residents’ sense of place. Smith summarizes that local identity, including quality of life preferences, local arts, history and traditions, way of life, recreational activities, and economic pursuit; and natural resources and the landscape of a place, all can contribute to a community’s identity. She also recommends that policies should be on both internal and external place identity and promoting the Delta should be in terms of past, present, and future. Building external identity for others to know about them like *branding and advertising* about the place is not enough. According to Smith, in rural area, loss of agriculture, homes, and displacement of residents means degraded *internal place identity*. So, beside values of environmental and

cultural values, economic security also can enhance sense of place. As a cycle, *feeling attached the place, they come back to protect the environment and values of their place.*

M. Ngo and M. Brklacich used a framework of sense of place comprised of place identity, place attachment, and sense of community in a case study of southern Ontario, Canada to discover that *new farmers are found to draw unevenly from both the physical and social landscape of the urban and rural environments* in the creation of a sense of place. This is to remind planners that people could have different level of attachment and understand the values of place differently [38]. Therefore, *organizing educating and sharing activities* is crucial to make them develop their sense of place.

Enhancement of Sense of Place for the Community

Environmental education is recommended by *A. Kudryavtsev, R.C. Stedman and M.E Krasny* [39] to increase the sense of place for the community. He identifies sense of place as a combination of two components: *place meaning and place attachment*. Then, using *environmental education* can increase both these two components. People later feel more attached to the environment and have more pro-environment behaviors. Educating them about ecological environment can be combined with educating them about the invisible history and cultural values of the place making their protecting behaviors even stronger. *J.D. Adams* [40] also emphasize experiences of humans toward place which creates meanings. *B.P. Kaltenborn,* and *T. Bjerke* [41] consider individual, group, or cultural processes opportunities for people to form experiences with the place they belong to. These studies prove that there are activities to enhance sense of place for the community. This is a foundation for policy recommendations for the case study of this paper.

Experimental

Materials

The author uses documentary research method to collect 90 most recent reports from Quang Nam's program on new rural development with consideration to authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning following *J. Scott* [42]. The selected posts have been accepted by the governments, so they meet the criteria of authenticity and credibility.

The process of documentary research method includes: data collection of the original form of the legal documents, data reduction into main points, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions [43].

The reports from Quang Nam's website for the program of new rural area development were reduced to summaries. Next, main ideas of summaries were analyzed to identify if they apply elements of sense of place theory and top-down approach and mode-type new rural area approach.

Methods

Based on the analyses of the regulation documents on new rural areas of Viet Nam, the two components of the regulation direction: top-down approach and model-type new rural area are encoded as the followings:

Y₁: top-down approach

Y₂: model-type new rural area approach

Next, each element of the "sence of place" theory is be encoded as X_i (i = 1, 2...7) for analyses as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Chemical characterization by Py-GC/MS, FTIR, Raman and SEM-EDS, indicating paint origin, color, medium and elemental analysis. Elements of Planning with Sense of Place

Elements of sense of place in planning		Elements of sense of place in planning	Encoded as:
(i)	Does the plan give opportunities for local people to talk and express their ideas about how they want to build their place? (for example, surveying youngsters if they want to develop a preserved park along their river surrounding their village)	Internal identity	X ₁
(ii)	Does the new architecture and construction in the plan respect the community's original style, their previous space and green area ratio, their previous environment and ecosystems? (for example, are all streams, rivers where children and women in the village love to visit every day and the herb gardens of families not affected by the new road or bridge)	Internal identity	X ₂
(iii)	Does the plan match their history, tradition, pride and culture? (for example, there are a lot of special food in the village market being cooked and enjoyed outdoor, is the plan of building a new indoor market affect this custom?)	Internal identity	X ₃
(iv)	In the plan is there a place people of the community love to come frequently, communicate and interact with each other? (for example, before where do people often gather together, a festival of a Prince who helped them in the past, building a new community house may not be as effective as fostering their festival by protecting their previous festival house? Another example is a village already has a famous traditional market where people meet and trade their herbs, is it better to develop community activities right there instead of building another construction for community meetings)	Internal identity	X ₄
(v)	Does the planning increase people's well-being, certainty, feeling good living there? (is there income increased or are jobs created by preserving the environments and ecosystems; new jobs could include teachers teaching children about ecosystem of their rivers, farmers selling herbs to local governments for medicine production and export, tourist guides about the village's forests and streams)	Internal identity	X ₅
(vi)	Does the planning include sharing and educating activities people about the values of their place? (for example, videos and documentary movies about the meanings of the river and its ecosystem as the symbol of the place, success of ancestors defeating enemies in the past making some lakes historical places)	Internal identity	X ₆
(vii)	Does the plan support labeling the place, branding their products and tourism services, making people from outside know about their place (for examples, advertising new products, organizing exhibition and developing museums and tours)?	External identity	X ₇
(viii)	Does the plan give opportunities for local people to talk and express their ideas about how they want to build their place? (for example, surveying youngsters if they want to develop a preserved park along their river surrounding their village)	Internal identity	X ₁

The function of the policy direction of the new rural area program is described in the following function:

$$F(X, Y) = \alpha_i \cdot X_i + \beta_i \cdot Y_i$$

with F: The policy direction of the Program

X_i: Elements of Sense of Place Theory

Y_i: Elements of top-down approach (i = 1) and model-type new rural area approach (i =

2)

Using this function, the author clarifies *what elements of sense of place theory has been included in the program*, what have not and what would be relevant impacts on sustainability of the rural areas. Then, the author could give relevant policy recommendation to improve the Program.

The author collects data from 10 latest posts of each sub-page of the website and encode these posts as a_1, a_2, \dots, a_{10} ; b_1, b_2, \dots, b_{10} etc. for each sub-web as the following:

- A. Documents: a_1, a_2, \dots, a_{10} ;
- B. News about rural areas in the provinces: b_1, b_2, \dots, b_{10} ;
- C. News about rural areas in Vietnam: d_1, d_2, \dots, d_{10} ;
- D. Provincial government's meetings about new rural areas: d_1, d_2, \dots, d_{10} ;
- E. Provincial Direction and Operation of new rural areas: e_1, e_2, \dots, e_{10} ;
- F. Articles about cases of new rural areas considered successful: f_1, f_2, \dots, f_{10} ;
- G. News from commune and district governments: g_1, g_2, \dots, g_{10} ;
- H. Sharing knowledge about agriculture practice: h_1, h_2, \dots, h_{10} ;
- I. Successful products and services of rural areas: i_1, i_2, \dots, i_{10} .

Results and discussion

The summaries of each report are analyzed to see how it matches top-down approach, model-type new rural area approach tested and how it includes elements of sense of place theory. If one report, for example b_2 , at the same time, follows top-down approach, of requiring commune government to ensure forest protection but also means preserving original environment, it matches top-down approach (Y_1) and contains element of sense of place theory (X_2). Then $b_2 = (0.5Y_1 + 0.5X_2)$. Each report, if having more than one element, will be put into brackets.

Analyzing 10 reports of each sub-page A, B, C...I, the author have the following equations for each sub-page:

$$A = a_1 + a_2 + \dots + a_{10} = 6X_5 + X_3 + 2Y_1 + Y_2$$

$$B = b_1 + b_2 + \dots + b_{10} = X_1 + 4X_5 + 1.5X_2 + 0.5X_3 + 0.5X_7 + 2.5Y_1$$

$$C = c_1 + c_2 + \dots + c_{10} = 3.25X_5 + 0.25X_3 + 0.25X_7 + 2.25Y_1 + 4Y_2$$

$$D = d_1 + d_2 + \dots + d_{10} = 1.5X_1 + 7.5Y_1 + Y_2$$

$$E = e_1 + e_2 + \dots + e_{10} = 6X_5 + 4Y_1$$

$$F = f_1 + f_2 + \dots + f_{10} = 2X_5 + 7Y_2 + Y_1$$

$$G = g_1 + g_2 + \dots + g_{10} = 6.5X_5 + 1.5X_1 + 2Y_2$$

$$H = h_1 + h_2 + \dots + h_{10} = 4.16X_5 + 3.66X_3 + 0.85Y_1 + 1.33X_2$$

$$I = i_1 + i_2 + \dots + i_{10} = 5.45X_5 + 1.45X_2 + 1.45X_3 + 0.7X_7 + 0.95Y_1$$

Analyses of the Report Groups

A is a group of reports about the overall policy implementation of provincial government. 60% of the reports are to emphasize *improving living standard and income of villagers purely*. Other reports are purely emphasizing the task of *turning villages into a model type*. One report is to ensure villages should have their typical, normally traditional products. This shows that policy goals have been put into separated plans. There are specialized plans for

typical and traditional products and other focusing projects for improving income. The situation is similar for E, the more detailed operation reports of the provincial government.

While B and C who include more reports about the program within the province and then in Vietnam consists of more elements of sense of place theory with X₃ about typical socio-cultural features and X₇ about branding products, the majority is still X₅ and Y₁ and Y₂. While in sense of place theory, environment (X₂) is well linked to *well-being of the community* (X₅). Here this linkage has not been formed.

D (provincial meetings reports) has the highest number of elements of Y₁, 7.5 (top-down approach) with all *meetings to direct government officials to regulate communes* to be clean, to have cement road and to build community building. Again, meetings focus on emphasizing *what governments would do to lead the villagers*. The chances for villagers to express their ideas are far less than the governments lead their campaigns.

F shows that most of the successful cases are those who meet the model type of new rural area criteria with having specific infrastructures.

G, the reports from village, communes and districts *consider improving income* (X₅) *most significant content*. Chances for people to express their ideas (X₁) are not many among these successful cases.

The group I of reports of successful products has equation with the biggest number of elements of sense of place theory X₅, X₂, X₃, X₇ with lower record of top-down approach (0.95Y₁).

H also has little top-down approach.

H and I show that successful cases improving villagers' life (X₅) could happen with very little top-down approach.

The summary of the data collected is organized in Table 2 to show what elements appear the most and the least or missed in the overall picture of Quang Nam's new rural area development.

Table 2. Summary of elements of sense of place theory and top-down approach and model-type new rural area approach in reports of Quang Nam's Program

	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆	X ₇	Y ₁	Y ₂
A (a ₁ ...a ₁₀)			1.0		6.0			2.0	1.0
B (b ₁ ...b ₁₀)	1.0	1.5	0.5		4.0		0.5	2.5	
C (c ₁ ...c ₁₀)			0.25		3.25		0.25	2.25	4.00
D (d ₁ ...d ₁₀)	1.5							7.5	1.0
E (e ₁ ...e ₁₀)					6.0			4.0	
F (f ₁ ...f ₁₀)					2.0			1.0	7.0
G (g ₁ ...g ₁₀)	1.5				6.5				2.0
H (h ₁ ...h ₁₀)		1.33	3.66		4.16			0.85	
I (i ₁ ...i ₁₀)		1.45	1.45		5.45		0.70	0.95	

Table 2 has shown that X₅ is included the most and highest in A, G, H, I. This means the majority of the policy direction is about improving income for rural citizens. More specifically, this element is presented in general documents of the province (A), reports from commune, village and districts (G). The shared knowledge (H) with highest X₅ (6.5) shows the policy practitioners consider knowledge about *improving income most important*. Successful products reports (I) also consider products that can *quickly improve villagers' income most crucial*.

On the other end is X₄ and X₆ which do not appear in any report. It means there is not yet concern about the actual interaction among people in the community. Educating about values of place to people has not been implemented either. This could lead to a lack of sustainability of

the program as people are not deeply connected to the places and desire to protect and develop them in their desired ways.

X_1 , X_2 and X_3 has a low percentage in the contents of reports. The governments of all levels have conducted some survey after implementing their plans for people's ideas. However, *there has not been a chance for people to express before the plans how they understand their places and how they want to develop these places*. There have reports been about a case of organic agriculture which is friendly to the environment from private sector. This means the policy makers recognize the values of the project. However, in their top-down approach, while there are a lot of documents and campaigns on keeping villages clean, *the ideas and creativity of how to build up environment-friendly agriculture projects* and rural villages are not presented.

Either Y_1 or Y_2 always appear in all reports. Even the type of knowledge and kinds of products *are top-down listed*. The advantages of community's knowledge and ideas have not fully utilized.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In above analyzed reports of Quang Nam, successful new rural development program is more of top-down investment, government-led campaigns and one model type of villages. Creativity is not empowered during the planning processes. The role of local people has not yet been fully utilized in this process.

The authors recommend that new rural areas should be developed with active public participation and local features being centralized them to be sustainable economically, socio-culturally and especially, environmentally.

Policy goals have been separated by various campaigns and projects of the local governments. There are separated projects for cleaning villages, income improvement and typical products. With sense of place approach, building the community's attachment to the place could enhance every aspect of development in *a package to achieve all-in-one success*. When they feel the urge to develop and protect their traditional herb fields with pride and meaningfulness, they will protect the environment, too. Such a project could increase income, too. Therefore, implementing clean agriculture projects or eco-tourism projects could lead to positive impacts on environment without running a campaign to call for attention for environment. In other words, environmental, socio-culture and economic development is linked in a cycle, not separated. Protecting environment makes their culture enhanced in a beautiful ecology. Culture makes environment more meaningful to people and increases their attachment to their places; economic benefits from environment-friendly businesses give them resources to protect, further develop, be proud of and advertise about their places.

There *are steps* following the "sense of place" theory to achieve the community-centered goal. First, it is important give the community the chances to express their ideas. Surveys and interviews before planning could be conducted to know the people's ideas and respect them. For example, *"How the community wants to build their place?" "What are the typical features of the place?"*. Second, give them the opportunities to interact with each other. Communication and interaction create the sense of belonging and attachment. It also inspires people to share more, to speak about what they want and to generate creative ideas. This requires a deep understanding that turn the community into the center of the Program will urge them to protect and develop their own places so that the achievements are sustained and inclusive. Finally, educating activities including about the roles of their ecology to their presence and future, the values of their cultures and typical features are necessary to make the whole community reach

the same level of knowledge and attachment to their places. This could help creative ideas based on previous values are more welcome and supported among their own community.

Implementation has not in tune with initial goals. Since the beginning, the central government has stated that “the criteria should be adjusted in accordance with the socio-economics conditions of the country in different periods of time” (Decision 491-QD/TTg). The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam also claims that the consideration and recognition of new rural communes rely on the set of the national criteria combined with other additional criteria flexibly under different situations. The list of the criteria has been adjusted twice in 2013 and 2016, adding criteria of applying technology into administration, health care, gender equality and pollution solution. However, policy implementation might have not achieved this flexibility, thanks to its difficulty to be evaluated toward the set criteria. Therefore, the flexibility could be repeated and enhanced. *Rural development implementation might not be fixed into physical features.* Infrastructure constructions could be different among villages, based on their actual habits and hobbies. Therefore “successful cases” could be evaluated based on the well-being of the people. For example, without building a standard community house, maintaining people’s engagement in interaction in their favorite previous place such as an annual festival could also be considered “successful”. It is time to consider turning physical criteria into community-reaction criteria to increase creativity and long-term effectiveness.

In order to ensure sustainability, long-term plan of each project should be prepared. For example, agriculture projects’ competitiveness should be assessed in comparison to other provinces, regions or countries in next five or ten years. When funding is limited and campaigns end, there should be *scenarios of how the community continue the program themselves* from bottom-up level. There could also preparation of negative scenarios on policy failure, for example, calling for investment without a specific plan about what sectors should be allowed may turn rural areas into some urban-like areas with more industry without actual improvement in environment and community sustainability.

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