

Abstract of Dissertation

Traditional Urban Community and Its Roles in Heritage Planning, A Case of Bangkok Heritage Core

文化遺産保全計画における伝統的都市コミュニティの役割に関する研究

—バンコク歴史都心部を事例として—

ชุมชนเมืองเก่ากับบทบาทในการอนุรักษ์และใช้งานมรดกวัฒนธรรม

กรณีศึกษาพื้นที่ศูนย์กลางการอนุรักษ์มรดกวัฒนธรรมกรุงเทพมหานคร

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The dissertation aims to explore the transformation of conservation concepts, plans, practices and responsible organisations, from conventional planning to heritage planning, in Bangkok, Thailand. It focuses on the change of the structure of traditional urban community and its roles, in response to the heritage planning approach. Furthermore, it proposes the policy implication to re-organise community structures and to support community involvement in heritage planning in the Bangkok heritage core. Finally, it explores the broader implications of heritage planning with community involvement to other cultural heritage places, particularly in Thailand and developing countries.

Since the 1990s, concepts of architectural and urban conservation have shifted to heritage planning that means the management of heritage resources in the contemporary uses of the past for present purposes. Heritage planning covers both heritage conservation – which is ‘the preservation’ based on intrinsic qualities, and ‘the conservation’ concerning extrinsic values of the areas – and heritage commodification, referred to contemporary uses of historic resources. Due to the widening management of heritage, local communities have been encouraged to take part in heritage planning processes to reduce conflicts over wide-range uses of heritage between various groups of stakeholders. In heritage approach, the communities have changed their actions from being controlled, according to legal tools, preservative conservation plans, and subsidies from the national and local governments in the conventional conservation, to the initiation of community controls and management of heritage resources.

Followed the international trends and inner socio-economic factors, conservation concepts in Thailand have been transformed from preservation planning to conservation planning and to heritage planning since the late 1990s. The concepts have combined the control of the public rights over properties by public-sector organisations with the market oriented heritage planning. Additionally, the local government supported the involvement of local communities in management of heritage resources.

The dissertation focuses on a study area in the Rattanakosin Area, the Bangkok heritage

core. In the area, the urban communities have been formed, coexisting with the structures of the urban hierarchy – the royal palaces, noble houses, and royal temples. Thanks to the changes of the conservation concepts, new community structures were created, in the form of community organisations overlaid on the original ones. Twenty-one ‘chumchon’ were laid down on indigenous communities while two ‘prachakom’ were laid down on the districts or ‘yarn’. The community organisations – prachakom and chumchon – were aimed towards working as a mediator in city management. Moreover, they have performed two specific roles in heritage planning including: participating in decision-making and being involved in benefits of heritage commodity.

By comparing the five areas under the latter 1990s specific plans that followed the 1982 conservation master plan, ‘Yarn Banglamphu’ – a district in the northern part of the Rattanakosin with its initially function as the place of palaces and houses of servants, the latter function as a market place, and the most recently function as a tourist place – was chosen to be the study area. The reasons of the selection are that: First, Yarn Banglamphu still have traces of historical backgrounds and significant tangible and intangible heritage resources left in the area; Second, it embraces two kinds of community organisations – one prachakom and six chumchon – that were initiated by the local government and by the ad-hoc group acting upon heritage controversy in the late 1990s; and Third, it has actively worked on heritage conservation under four state-led plans, and has served for local festivals and tourist activities. The study area was analysed on two main parts: new structures of the traditional urban community and new roles of the community in heritage planning.

For *the first part: new community structures*, the study investigated the characteristics of the new community structures and the relationship between the communities’ residents and the community structures.

In 1998, Prachakom Banglamphu was created by the local government policy as a civic group or a community-network organisation, consisting of six communities and civic groups in Yarn Banglamphu. Prachakom Banglamphu is not an organisation defined by the law. Instead, its roles and functions were designed under policies and plans of the Bangkok Governor. Moreover, in its establishment period the prachakom initiated its specific roles in heritage conservation that have existed since then. Concerning the social structure, Prachakom initially gathered the leaders of the communal and formal organisational subsystems, representing all communities and groups of people in the communities as well as professionals, scholars, and non-government organisations, to work as the committee of prachakom. Later until now, the committee members of the prachakom have transformed to be that almost all of the representatives are from the communal organisational subsystems from four communities and civic groups. Few committee members are from the formal organisational subsystems.

Six chumchon in Yarn Banglamphu were re-created by drawing geographical boundaries. Consequently, the committee of chumchon were established. The committee members were

elected by the communities' residents, supported by the district administration office. Chumchon in Yarn Banglamphu perform their main roles under the Bangkok Regulation (1985); however, they have very few roles dealing with heritage planning. Geographically, chumchon were designated by the government to cover the concentrated housing areas in the urban blocks. The clear areas of the re-created chumchon are different from the indigenous communities that have been conceived by the communities' residents and have been grounded on the old structures coexisting between the urban community urban and hierarchy structures – temples, mosques. Concerning the social structure, by placing the new structure onto the traditional one, the old community structures in the form of communal organisational subsystems (neighbours, ethnic groups, occupational groups, religious institutes, and monarchs, based on persisting old community structures and specific historical backgrounds) and the new community structures in the form of formal organisational subsystems (the committees of chumchon and the gov't-led voluntary groups) have been associated with each other.

The investigation of the relationships between old and new community structures showed that the communities' residents in Yarn Banglamphu have been closely related to communal organisational subsystems. The residents also have quite good relationships with the committee members of chumchon, the gov't-led voluntary groups and Prachakom Banglamphu. The new community structure; particularly in the form of the committee of chumchon, has been influenced by the old community structure. Moreover, the community structures in various kinds of groups have collaboratively worked with one another in heritage planning. From all results, the communities in Yarn Banglamphu, thus, can be denoted as 'a living heritage' or 'a cultural heritage place'.

For *the second part: new roles of the community in heritage planning*, the study investigated the effectiveness of the communities' performance in heritage planning – in other words, the extent of community involvement in the heritage plans and practices in Yarn Banglamphu. The investigation was conducted by the assessment of community participation in heritage planning. The assessment criteria included the criteria for evaluating community participation in decision-making process (scope of participation, intensity of participation, and degree of consensus), and the criteria for evaluating community involvement in heritage commodity activities (scope of participation and consequences of heritage commodity). The understanding of the characteristics of community structures will also be used as part of the assessment criteria.

The investigation showed that there was a high level of community involvement (scope of participation and intensity of participation) in two actions in ad-hoc ways (Case 1, the participation in an opposition against the conservation master plan for the Rattanakosin Area, the action plan, and the proposition of a plan for establishing community centre, and Case 4, the involvement in organising local festivals). The active organisations were Prachakom Banglamphu and the communities that have strong relationships with the prachakom. In contrast,

there was a low level of community involvement (scope of participation and intensity of participation) in two state-led heritage plans (Case 2, the participation in the plan for Ratchadamnoen Street, and Case 3, the participation in the plan for Khaosan Road). The active organisations were the leaders of the formal organisational subsystems or the committee of *chumchon*. However, in all cases, the degree of consensus building was low.

Concerning community involvement in benefits of heritage, the communities' residents in Yarn Banglamphu gained benefits of heritage commodity by many ways. Although their rate of participation in local festivals is high, their rates of involvement in local programmes for increasing incomes and in the controls of community areas in are fair.

In terms of active community organisations and coordinators, the active community organisations in Case 1 and 4 that gained a high level of community involvement include Prachakom Banglamphu and the communities that have strong relationships with the prachakom. Besides, the results from the questionnaire surveys – revealing that the communities with strong relationships with Prachakom Banglamphu ensured a high level of participation, gained high social and economic benefits, and had positive attitudes towards heritage conservation – confirm the importance of the prachakom as an active collaborator between communities as well. The coordinator in the government sector and the mediator between the public and private sectors were built in various forms. The effective coordinator and mediator were the organisations working in Case 4, organising local festivals – the Community Development Division of the Phra Nakhon District Administration Office, and the Cultural Council of the Phra Nakhon District.

From all results, it can be stated that two significant factors leading to a high level of community involvement are: First, the community organisation working as a collaborator, specifically Prachakom Banglamphu; and Second, the connection between the private sector (community organisations and commercial sector) and the public sector.

The two factors brought about two policy implications for improving efficiency in performing the roles of community organisations in heritage planning in the Bangkok heritage core. First, the policy implication to re-organise community structures, including: i) re-organise the registered communities 'chumchon' by enhancing sense of community as it is a living heritage, re-defining the persisting registered communities 'chumchon', and re-defining the definitions of 'chumchon' under the law; and ii) re-organise the community-network organisation 'prachakom' or other civic groups that work as connectors between communities by re-creating extensive networks between the prachakom and the community organisational subsystems inside the communities, and re-defining definitions of 'prachakom' under the law. Second, the policy implications to re-create the connection between community organisations and other stakeholders in a public-private partnership, including: i) re-create the mediator between the public and private sectors; and ii) re-create the coordinator in the government sector.

The practices of heritage planning with community involvement in the Bangkok heritage core provoked two significant points that can be implied to heritage planning with community

involvement in Thailand and developing countries. First, the traditional urban community should be accepted as a 'cultural heritage place', due to its persisting tangible and intangible heritage resources. However, in the case of Bangkok and other developing countries face threats caused by the lack of the concern from heritage plan; the trend of the loss of the community identity; and the imbalance among communal needs, state-led conservation, and commodity activities.

Second, the community organisations should take part in heritage planning processes through a public-private partnership, sharing of the powers in managing heritage resources and maintaining a balance between heritage conservation and heritage commodity. However, the public-private partnership and the involvement of local community in heritage planning in Bangkok, as well as in some developing countries, have some constraints, caused by: the centralisation of authority; the lack of co-ordination mechanism; and the lack of appropriate legal system for encouraging and strengthening community organisations.

To sum up, local communities in Yarn Banglamphu are examples of traditional urban communities that show good adaptation of community structure and high attempts at getting involved in heritage planning. However, the communities need supports in order to enhance their significant heritage resources, and to ensure proper operational and structural systems. If they can share more powers in the management of heritage to balance communal needs, heritage conservation, and heritage commodity, their heritage utilisation can be correlated with sustainable development that can contribute to real and lasting socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion in the communities.