

# **City Rehabilitation with Community Participation on Cultural and Social Rejuvenation**

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## **Abstract**

This paper purposes to archive for translation of how Chiang Mai communities with in an urban aspect seeking methods to success their aims on community rehabilitation through heritage conservation. Overall representation comes from a development project by non-governmental alliance, named Fuen Baan YaanWieng Project which recruited varied partners from scholars, youth professionals and governor officers. The project focuses on promote the unique value of Chiang Mai old city and the community participation to conserve its heritage.

The methodology of this project applied three steps of rehabilitation process

1) Identification of community's unique value 2) a procedure on cultural and social rejuvenation based on community participation 3) How a center place or social system assemble a support for the program. The three steps are manifested as a core value to reveal questions and move forwards to implement and reach out community and alliance understanding.

The result shows through the pilot projects based on community participation and community opinion which all excellent represent a good path way of community and city rehabilitation. Additionally, community has learned and experienced to rejuvenate their old social and cultural ecology; which gradually collapsed by urbanization. The communities have applied cultural and heritage assets as a tool along with collaboration and empowerment from varied agents who focused on cultural and heritage conservation as well. The new model of working with participatory approach has become a core concept which presently widespread over the old city and gradually started its impact in city level.

**Key words:** Community Participation, Cultural Heritage, Social Ecology

## Introduction

The translational knowledge on this paper reveals experiences and academic approaches on cultural heritage management with community participation on their sites. From 1977 or after a fear of communist vanish onward; the community and non-governmental organization have been gradually effective. It can be able to observe on news, whenever a mega project initialed by government or private sector there always have a movement establishment for checking and questioning on the project even in Chiang Mai. The people movement is clearer to see for example when celebration of 700 years of Chiang Mai City in 1995 was reached, the movement of cultural heritage conservation was interestingly manifested and received widely public interest. Its tangible results are an establishment of Chiang Mai Art and Culture Center in 1996, Ngan Sueb San on 1995-2000, Hong Hien Sub San; a LanNa local wisdom school in 2003.

During the period of celebration, approximately 5 years, the people movements for cultural heritage conservation and management were highly active and focused on a value of Chiang Mai in city's level. The pioneers of movement are basically academic scholars, well educated people and NGO while local relevance involving by government track as municipal registered community's participation. The local communities within old city have been practicing to conserve their heritage value by ritual or religious collaboration and temples were a center.

The remarkable change is a point that this paper goals to elucidate by decoding three community pilot projects, two community based organization and one social phenomena on how local participate with community rehabilitation concept. The three communities pilot projects root on the initiation of Feun Baan YuanWang Project; Chiang Mai Old City and Community Rehabilitating Project-established on 2011 active 2011-present, Feun Baan YuanWang Project subsidized Kon.Jai.Baan (community architect) to do a daftly survey for understanding of what is an authenticity or characteristic of Chiang Mai old city. Gradually, the survey approach gained a brilliant result on inspiring locals to join the program, additionally; local received more understanding of what is the core value of their potentiality, community value and heritage, including being able to conserve it by themselves. The three are Pwuaktam community, Ming Muang market and Sai Moon community. These three have still worked

freshly until present day and become a case study and inspiration site for other communities who interested. The Two community based organizations are gradually grow due to success cases of the three communities. The significant point is how do the three communities operate and how do local community think about sustainability for bigger scale.

For further understanding, this paper will provide important information to consider a context of Chiang Mai old city as a heritage site, community participation for public issue, and community's social ecological framework.

### **Chiang Mai Old City as a Heritage**

Chiang Mai old city has a clearly compound with historical wall and rectangular moat. For historically viewpoint, it founded by King Mangrai In 1396 with inner and outer city –inner is a rectangular form with 3.2 square kilometer and later with crescendo shape of outer site, approximately 4.5 square kilometer. Inside square shaped old moat contains 13 communities with municipal official registered and 38 old beautiful temples with historic wall, 4 fortresses, and 5 gates. Inside the city, local people habitats, recently around two thousand houses, with mixed use of building between house and business units, but majority still be a local house with raising up of tourism business units. For generation to generation, the old city has similar social ecology like many Buddhist that has community temples as community center in both social and spiritual way. There are no academic proof in social aspect that what and how development change and effect to this society. But, visually, the decreasing of Buddhist member of nearest house or neighbor; who used to belong to temple, in Buddhist day it proof of life style's changing and the roll as center place are no mare.

Academically, the above discussion are lead to two distinguish values, which have already been defined by from relevant organization and been understood for a decade, called *Tangible Heritage* and *Intangible Heritage*. UNESCO's definition is "*tangible heritage*" includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., which are considered valuable and show a fruitful of civilization knowledge and culture. The "*Intangible Heritage*" or *Cultural heritage* means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills including instruments,

objects. Artefacts cultural ecology related to community, group of people and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage has an interesting aspect such as it is a community or group's representation their response by giving a special meaning and performing their lifestyle to interact to their environment, and that is significant to transmit their knowledge from generation to generation.

From the UNESCO's definition, the main focus on this paper is how local people interact to their heritage in term of rehabilitation and conservation. As already addressed, the participation of local is changed due to urbanization, so that crucially important to study and crystalize of what tool and how the local understanding and implementing on these topic.

### **The Definition of Communities Participation**

To understand of how local people in Chiang Mai old city performs their participation on the subject. First, the definition of participation should be founded. Social or public participation is a socialized process that people can involve, influence or decide on public issues which they are relevant as a stakeholder; or they feel being a part of it. The level of participation can be varied and that represented not only how important of the issue but also show social ecology, structure and quality of life in a community as well.

Academically, the participation is interestingly defined by Arnstein (1969) on the concept of ladder, named "ladder of citizen participation" metaphor the height of the ladder to be a quality of participation. The concept contents-the ladder- eight different levels which are perfectly clear the step of how people participant to a public issue in varied density depends on their personal authority.

The First: *Manipulation* and the second: *Therapy* these two levels mention that the local people participates in the level of being educated and assisted to agree with the proposal of a power holder.

The third: *Informing*, local people is informed of what is happening, might receive the information from different kinds of media but it is a one-way communication. Local people have a right to receive an

information but their opinion are powerless.

The fourth: *Consultation*, local people's opinions can initial to influence to the public project, however, there still have a limitation and true value of their message are just being a part.

The fifth: *Placation*; local people's opinion start to certainly influence and effect to person in authority's decision and sometime local might get a chance to be hand-picked to be a member of a government board.

The sixth: *Partnership*; local people and power holders are equally in term of making decision and taking responsibility for the project.

The seven: *Delegated Power*; local people can start taking control, and the power holders need to start negotiating with the citizens. The eight: *Citizen Control*; local people is the power to decide.

The goal of community participation is to improve communication between stakeholders in the interest of facilitating better decision-making and sustainable development (Nampila, 2005).

### **Fuen Baan Yaan Wieng Chiang Mai Project: (Community Rehabilitating Project) and other community based project.**

Fuen Baan Yaan Wieng Chiang Mai Project is a non-government project, established on a mid of 2011, focusing on community rehabilitating by community participation. The members are varied, basically use a term "alliance", such as scholars from faculty of Fine Art Chiang Mai University, an official team from Chiang Mai Art and Culture; belong to municipal authority, and young professional architect, NGO on environmental subject and contemporary artist. The project's purposes are goal on two significant topics, first is to promote the unique value of Chiang Mai old city as tangible heritage and second, for supporting and empowerment local to get involved or start to conserve their community heritage's value; tangible and intangible. The first purpose is manifested through some cultural project such as local wisdom workshops or cultural events. The second is implemented via participatory approaches such as community brainstorming meeting on the community heritage topic or conduct the surveying and programming a project together with the project alliance. Within 2 years, there are 6 workshops on cultural and local wisdom practices and 3 pilot projects on community participation

and two community based organizations are founded; Chiang Mai Heritage Trust and Chiang Mai Urban Community Network.

However, the Fuen Baan Yaan Wieng Chiang Mai Project performs under a volunteer concept and still needs a subsidy from the government agency by proposing a project annually. For community based organizations are also confronting with the same situation and just recently, their committee are coin a new policy to do some social entrepreneur projects aim to sustain their own resources and wish to have more effective and impact in a higher level.

### **Materials and Methods**

1. Translational some participatory rehabilitating and conservation project by

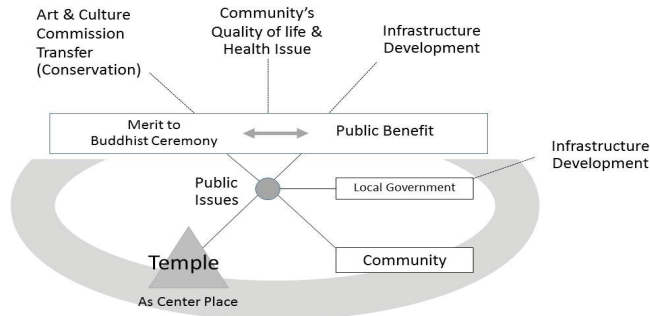
- Community and pilot project area survey
- In-depth Interview with key performances
- Focus Group with key performances

2. Analyze by SWOT approach and conclude the result

### **Result and Discussion**

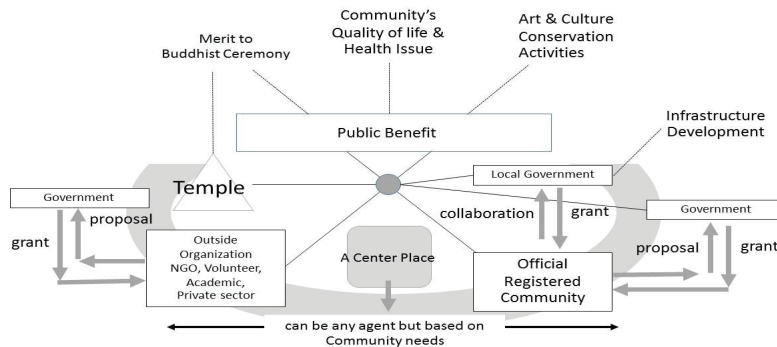
Community Participation on heritage issue

In the past, the community participation for conserving heritage in the sense of ritual ceremony within community temple as a center. The participants aimed to conduct a merit in Buddhist belief which is a donation which benefits to three purposes, first, to expand Buddhism to be remained and continually practiced by donating or supporting monk and temple. Second is to wish the goodness and merit will create their good life and, last, to public benefit. The participation on heritage issue is attached to all these ritual practicing which monk and temple play an important role and being center place. It's clearly seen on, first, physical or tangible aspect for example public facility or temple building, second, is on intangible topic such as supporting or commissioning to local artisan, traditional musician, and local wisdom teacher to do their work or transferring their knowledge to new generation.



***Present with the perspective of city rehabilitation***

From 2012 to present, Fuen Baan YaanWieng Chiang Mai Project have initiated three pilot projects with community based plan and participation. The result of works show interestingly how community operate the project and how other agents place their interaction. The collaboration of differences creates a paradigm shift to community work in topic of heritage and conservation for Chiang Mai old



city.

From this diagram, it describes of how local community and other agents react to the conservation and public issue, moreover, remarkably show that community participation becomes a core concept from a level of Placation and Partnership onwards. In fact, this module is emerged in other field work but on heritage and conservation in community level and city level are never happened before. For example, Pwuk Tam community, there is an only one left community in Chiang Mai old city where a

fruitful of knowledge and craftsmanship on producing golden iron decoration for Buddhist temple and for a common ornament. The pilot project initiated by young professional architect; Kon.Jai.Baan one of Fuen Baan's alliance, did a survey on Pwuak Tam community and received interesting information from the community, additionally, having a community meeting several times and gained a community plan on heritage and conservation issue. The Pwuak Tam community plan had passed to assistance professor Dr.Woralun Boonyasurat; a head of Thai art department, Faculty of Fine Art Chiangmai University, then she and her students started to collaborative work with community for restoring old building in the temple area to be a community museum opened in March 2012. Interestingly, this resource of project came from various groups; such as community, temple, university, department store, local politician etc.

This model became widely apply in community participation projects on heritage and conservation. It gradually lead community members and other agents to question on how to sustain this process and system not only for prolong a program but to guarantee that other communities within inner or outer old city can continually working and creating an impact to city level.

### **Remarkable change on social ecology and community perception**

(adapted from academic paper, Community Based Tourism and Old City Revitalization: The case study of Chiang Mai City, 2014, Samart Suwannarat and Korawan Sangkakorn)

From in-depth interview with community members who are pioneer participant on community participatory conservation, collaborated with Fuen Baan Yaan Wieng Chiang Mai Project- Community Rehabilitating Project- and Kon.Jai.Baan reflected their opinion on how they perceive and see their own social and cultural ecology to react to the conservation and public work program.

- 1) Community member are getting small in number due to local has moves out and allow outside investor to rent for mostly running tourism business.

- 2) Before working with some conservation organiza-



tion- Fuen Baan Yaan Wieng Project and Kon.Jai.Baan, there is no systematic on conservation work. The issue fell down to personally interests who have a limit resource.

3) Community committees are become important role for public work after municipality announce to establish registered community.

4) Community in old city are municipal registered-they're all volunteer and most of them are in elder age, in charge of the public work including conservation program which has two aspects, for Buddhist ritual ceremony and collaboration with outside organization.

5) A community committee has to follow municipal policy and propose project with budget every year; the topic of proposals are infrastructure improvement, cultural activities, health and elder support.

6) Temple is still be a center for public work and most of them are also provide space for being community office with basic infrastructure and community wire broadcasting. In some temple the abbot also plays a role as a leader community leader; by social acceptance, and project participant, for example Lam Chang, Pun Orhn, Pwuk Tam Community.

7) Wire broadcasting becomes an important media alongside with word of mouth to communicate and announce news to community.

8) After achievement on some pilot projects, community members seem to have a right track to develop their conservation project with understanding on heritage value.

9) There are some concern from community members and alliance on sustainability of working on this heritage and conservation and starting to explore a new model; such as Chiang Mai Heritage Trust and community tour operation which aim to expand concept and experience to city level.

## Conclusion

From the study, Community members in old city area are actively participates in community rehabilitating program. Community members found their own perspective and procedure to conserve their community heritage value. Their aspect of participate still line in a concept of volunteer with a bit different to the past. That is the subject doesn't need an involving with a religion ritual but can be in other field and resource management can be varied; such as from a government agency of private sector or academic institution.

These all emerge from urbanization and new social ecology, moreover, the new methodology of enlarging community participation and empowerment the members also giving a chance to community to start up different working models in every working steps. Communities found that their potentiality which related to capital, participation process, human resource management and public relations are extremely important for succeed the community rehabilitation via heritage and conservation program. Even though, the urban context is quite difficult to link up and work together on such a public issue but the challenging is laid forwards of how to transfer the perspective and knowledge on heritage, conservation and community rehabilitation to spread to other community and other generation with a new system that can be function on sustainability and linkage with varied agencies.

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