

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES OF WAT KET, CHIANG MAI PROVINCE*

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Abstract

Chiangmai, a province in the northern region of Thailand, is internationally known as a progressive, developing city and a famous tourist attraction. The government has approved random, uncoordinated construction plans such as for roads and housing estates to develop Chiangmai and its economy. Consequently, most of the local communities are dissatisfied with these unpredictable plans so they have stood up against the government, forming assemblies to reclaim the rights they once had. Unfortunately, only one community, Wat Ket, has succeeded to defer the road expansion plans from the government that would completely destroy their beloved historical sites, engraved with memories from generation to generation.

Wat Ket is a community of cultural diversity, filled with people from many religions and ethnicities such as Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Chinese, Thai natives, Indians, Burmese and other nationalities. Due to its history of being an old port city, Wat Ket is one of the historical community sites in Chiangmai. Even though this diversity would seem to present a problem in uniting the people of different cultures to stand up against the state's interference that might greatly damage the community, Wat Ket community has proved very effective in uniting themselves together as one and to become a strong community that is able to protect their own architectural and cultural heritage. They changed the government's idea of modifying the area into a business district towards conserving the heritage instead. Nowadays, the form of assembly that was formed by a small group of people to preserve their historical heritage for later generations is hardly to be found in the wider society due to the materialist focus of both people, corporations and governments, which is increasing with each day. Most nations

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** นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอก สาขาการจัดการมรดกทางสถาปัตยกรรมและการท่องเที่ยว คณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์
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tend to focus only on economic development goals without concern for the cultural significance of places. Many developing cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Seoul or Singapore have developed rapidly and later faced multiple difficulties to revitalize old bypassed areas. Wat Ket can offer a model for community action to safeguard such areas from such misguided, single-purpose development. This dissertation recounts the case of Wat Ket community, stressing its success in assembling people from different ethnic groups and different religions. It also shows the important role of local community leaders in getting the community together. This unity is seen as the most distinctive characteristic for success in community management in both conservation and development.

Keywords: 1. GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY 2. CONSERVATION 3. WAT KET

บทคัดย่อ

จังหวัดเชียงใหม่เป็นที่รู้จักในระดับสากลว่าเป็นเมืองที่กำลังพัฒนาและมีแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่มีชื่อเสียงอย่างมากมาย และในขณะเดียวกันก็เป็นเมืองซึ่งมีการพัฒนาควบคู่กันไป รัฐบาลได้วางแผนการก่อสร้างเพื่อพัฒนาเชียงใหม่ให้สอดคล้องกับแผนพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจของประเทศ ตัวอย่างเช่นโครงการสร้างถนนและโครงการที่ดินจัดสรรมากมาย แต่เนื่องจากโครงการบางโครงการต้องทำลายชุมชนท้องถิ่นทั้งสถาปัตยกรรมและโบราณสถาน จึงทำให้ชุมชนต่อต้านการพัฒนาของรัฐบาล และจัดตั้งกลุ่มเพื่อเรียกคืนสิทธิที่พวกเขามี แต่น่าเสียดายที่มีเพียงชุมชนเดียวคือวัดเกตได้ประสบความสำเร็จในการปรับเปลี่ยนแผนการขยายถนนที่ผ่านในชุมชน เนื่องจากรัฐบาลจะทำลายสถานที่ทางประวัติศาสตร์อันเป็นที่รักและเป็นที่มาของความทรงจำจากทุกยุคทุกสมัย

วัดเกตเป็นชุมชนที่มีความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมและเต็มไปด้วยผู้คนจากหลายศาสนาและชาติพันธุ์ต่างๆ เช่นชาวพุทธ ชาวคริสต์ ชาวมุสลิม ชาวจีน ชาวไทย ชาวอินเดีย ชาวพม่าและชาวต่างชาติ ชุมชนวัดเกตเป็นชุมชนประวัติศาสตร์ที่เก่าแก่แห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดเชียงใหม่ แม้ว่าความหลากหลายนี้เหมือนจะก่อให้เกิดปัญหาในการรวมกันของคนในวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกัน แต่เพื่อต่อต้านการแทรกแซงของรัฐที่อาจทำให้ชุมชนเสียหายอย่างมากมันทำให้ชุมชนวัดเกตพิสูจน์ให้เห็นว่าชุมชนได้รวมตัวกันเป็นหนึ่งและกลายเป็นชุมชนที่เข้มแข็งที่สามารถปกป้องมรดกทางสถาปัตยกรรมและวัฒนธรรมของตนเองได้

พวกเขาเปลี่ยนแปลงแผนพัฒนาของรัฐบาลในการปรับเปลี่ยนพื้นที่ย่านธุรกิจไปสู่การเป็นพื้นที่เพื่อการอนุรักษ์ ในปัจจุบันรูปแบบของการชุมนุมที่เกิดขึ้นจากกลุ่มคนกลุ่มเล็กๆเพื่อรักษามรดกทางประวัติศาสตร์แทบจะไม่สามารถพบได้ในสังคมที่กว้างขึ้นเนื่องจากการมุ่งเน้นวัตถุนิยม ประเทศส่วนใหญ่มีแนวโน้มที่จะมุ่งเน้นเฉพาะเป้าหมายการพัฒนาทางเศรษฐกิจโดยไม่คำนึงถึงความสำคัญทางวัฒนธรรมของสถานที่ และเมืองที่กำลังพัฒนาหลายแห่งเช่นกัวลาลัมเปอร์โซลหรือสิงคโปร์ได้มีการพัฒนาอย่างรวดเร็วและต่อมาก็ประสบกับปัญหาหลายอย่างในการฟื้นฟู วัดเกตสามารถนำเสนอรูปแบบการดำเนินการของชุมชนเพื่อปกป้องพื้นที่ของตน วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้กล่าวถึงกรณีชุมชนวัดเกตที่เน้นความสำเร็จในการร่วมมือของคนจากกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ต่างๆและ

ศาสนาต่างๆ นอกจากนี้ยังแสดงให้เห็นถึงบทบาทที่สำคัญของผู้นำท้องถิ่นในการสร้างชุมชนด้วยกัน ความสามัคคีนี้ถือเป็นลักษณะเฉพาะที่โดดเด่นที่สุดสำหรับความสำเร็จในการจัดการชุมชนทั้งในด้านการอนุรักษ์และด้านการพัฒนา

คำสำคัญ : แนวทางการพัฒนาชุมชน วัดเกต การอนุรักษ์

Introduction

Wat Ket community has been a historic community of Chiang Mai city where has occurred since 1976 during the times after the establishment of Chiang Mai ruled by Rattanakosin royal. It has been located on the Ping's river area (Figure 1). Before Chiang Mai occurred railway, the Wat Kate community had depended on water transportation. Boat was important for trade and economic activities. People in Wat Kate community have religious diversity such as Buddhist, Moslem and Sikh. There are also various nationalities such as Chinese, Thai, Indian, westerner and native people. These differences affect to architectural style in this community. When the railway and road were constructed along the Ping River, they cut off the connectivity in Wat Kate community. So, in the opinion of elderly (Doungchan Apavatjirut Charoernmuang, 2005, p. 86-117); Wat Kate community starts from Kaewnawarat Road, in the east of Nakornping's bridge to the Bumroongraj intersection, and finished at the south of Bumroongraj road and on the right side of Charoenmuang Road to Nawarat Bridge and along the Charoenrat streets.



Figure 1 Boundary of Old Wat Kate community, Chiang Mai
(Researcher, 2017)

Since Wat Kate community has diversity of nationality and religion, the architectures are various, too. The popular vehicles in the community like boat which are made of wood also affect to the building style. So construction materials mostly are wood. The architectural characters are combined Lanna architecture with Western architecture and Lanna with Chinese which we can see from shop houses, Leawsawat family's house, former merchant ship Ching Mai to Bangkok.



Figure 2 The styles of wood crafted architecture around Wat Ket community: an example of Lanna–Chinese style.(Researcher, 2017)

The building is a traditional Chinese row house and there are Chinese artifact patterns in front of the building with the aesthetic stuccos. This building won the 1st Old House Preservation Project award in 1991 and Wat Kate community received Conservation Awards Best Arts and Architecture Type of local Annual 2005, which is decided by the Association of Siamese Architects Under Royal Patronage, from Royal Princess Maha Chakri

Wat Kate transportation system

Because of economic growth in Chiang Mai, the community becomes more crowded. The streets in the Wat Kate district are main roads to connect with the other places so the roads over there are extended 6-10 m. to facilitate cars and passengers. The traditional lifestyle of the villagers which mainly depends on walking to visit neighbors is gone because there are sidewalks on each plot of land in the past. People can use the way behind sidewalks as a shortcut to walk back or forth to each other and find some ways for chatting with the people next door. Nowadays, there is no clear boundary of the sidewalk. In addition, each house has more private vehicles so the main road to Wat Kate was used as a main thoroughfare.(Doungchan Apavatjrut Charoernmuang, 2008, p. 1-41)

Also, since February 2009 of Chiang Mai 'Town Planning Revision 3', Wat Kate community has placed in the area of land use in the future, the red zone in Chiang Mai physical plan is set for the most commercial and residential density. Under the transportation system of this planning, road will be expanded to 20 m. along Ping River that it will make Wat Kate district total destroyed.

Development of Chiang Mai Urban Planning

In the period of Prime Minister Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, the Department of Town and Country Planning of Ministry of Interior prepared "Chiang Mai Town Planning in 1990" by planning from the year 1965 to the year 1969. This town planning was set for the future of Chaing Mai in the next 20 years. It plans to expand the functions and municipal area but at that time its area only covered 17.5 km / TA. Moreover, there was not the Town Planning Act at that time so this town planning had no effect to land use control.

There was City Planning Act in 1975. The Department of City Planning declared "Chiang Mai Town Planning 1989", covering area of 100 sq.km. The land was divided into 11 categories according to this town planning and the law came effect in five years from 1984-1989. (Somporn Sangwongse, 2009, para. 2).

Later, Planning Department determined to improve urban planning; Chiang Mai was the priority for urban planning improvement in 1989. It has expanded from 100 to 130 sq km and contained two types of urban planning: land use plan and transportation system plan. It was published to be the rule No. 78/1989, valid for 5 years from 1989 to 1994. This planning had a multi-centered urban planning concept (poly centric development) to avoid concentration in the center, but this concept came from the western ideas, which must be accompanied by the decentralization to local government. Thus, the local government of Thailand at that time was not enough strong to provide effectively services so the concept of power distribution could not be developed.(Worawimol Chairat, 2015, p. 21)

In 1999, Bureau of Chiang Mai City Planning announced a total planning of Chiang Mai (second' revision). At that time, the area outside Chiang Mai city became municipal and decentralization due to the constitution. It had gradually road construction under flow system of transportation. This town planning began developing in the way of future land use.

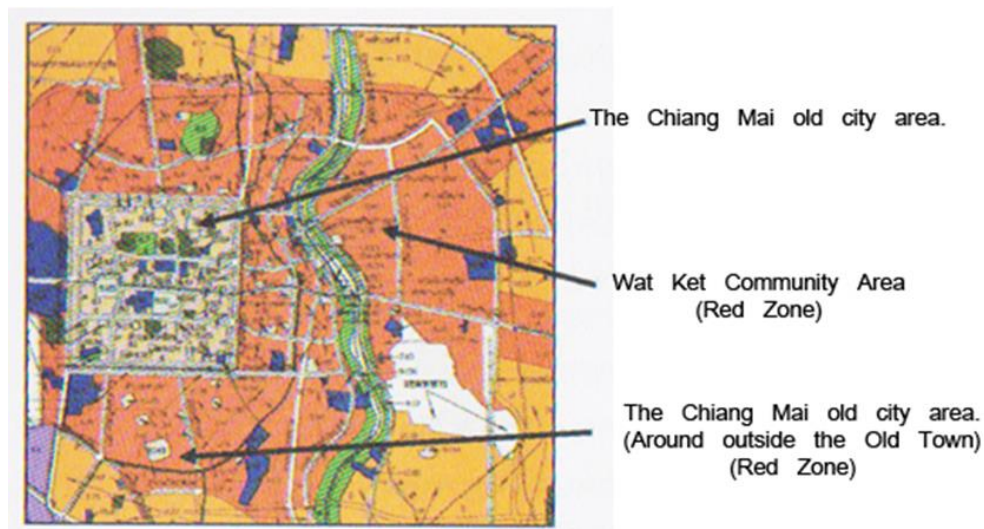


Figure 3 The expanded Chiang Mai land-use plan 1999 (second revision): Wat Ket is changed to the red zone.

Source: The Story of Chiang Mai Urban Planning, (2015)

However, the Department of Public Works and Town Planning prepared to announce total town planning of Chiang Mai in February 2008. There were specifications and list of Chiang Mai city map (third' revision) by request the participation of people in 7 districts in Chiang Mai. It selected target groups from the people who had an interest or have been affected from modification or cancel of regulations on land use in the total town planning within 90 days. Although the whole residents in Chiang Mai were not active or interested in, the villagers of Wat Kate district showed a clear stance on the matter that they may be affected if a red zone for land use in their district was declared. (Worawimol Chairat, 2009, p. 9-20)

If the area in red zone was declared, it could be developed commercially. This zone will also result in the construction or expansion of investment because the red zone in term of urban planning law is a commercial area and high residential density. It can extend the road from the original width, 6 m. to 20 m. covering around Wat Ket district, including more than 30 roads of the oldest of Chiang Mai city.

Problems of overlap between the old architecture, urban planning and urban communities

Problems and the impacts of the draft comprehensive Chiang Mai plan; Chiang Mai land-use Town Planning 2008 (third revision)

To implement the plan, it has to expropriate the area of old buildings community in the city including the ancient conservative villages and historic buildings which were constructed at least 7 generations for expanding the roads. The first area where will be expropriated is the area of Wat Kate – Faham. If it is expropriated, it will be the norm of expropriation for the whole land in accordance with "total town planning draft". To complete the plan, most of old buildings along the Ping River from Nawarat Bridge to Bridge City Pink are dismantled and replaced by the other 20 meters wide along the Ping River.

In addition, traditional houses and buildings where have been hundreds of years old along the "total town planning draft" will be shattered, especially the historic buildings where are the last group of Lanna House in Chiang Mai. They will be demolished because they obstruct the traffic and they will be replaced by the new buildings.

The provision of "total town planning draft" in Chiang Mai lacks of practice detail as the case of buildings that look old but require only Ka Lae or gable. In fact, the histories of old buildings have many forms. When these provisions are vulnerable so roman building styles where have gables, will become the conservative building of this draft. It does not define the height of the building in the future. It has only a manner determined by two-dimensional systems by per cent of the area so the high buildings may pop up in the low dense residential area where can make conflict in society.

This town planning draft does not take into account of geographical and historical context despite Chiang Mai is living historic city and heritage town but this draft has no space for preservation for housing, it only appears the area of land use to conserve Thai culture.

Troubleshooting in the past

People in Wat Kate community strongly protest the draft of total town planning of Chiang Mai because Wat Kate district is included to stay in the red zone. This condition cause many problems such as population. Also, the entrepreneurs can access the high building and adjust the atmosphere of cultural preservative city, Chiang Mai. Furthermore, the high building is aggravating air pollution which is violently major environmental problem of Chiang Mai.

Department of Public Works and Town claimed that the specified area as a commercial arcade or red area is based on population density. In case of Wat Kate district, there are 108 persons per rai and after searching and calculating the population base, it actually shows that the density of people is not up 7.5 persons per rai. So it is clear that the information obtained by the Department of Public Works may be inaccurate.(Roun Pakka Bann Marim, 2008, para. 1)

Because of this incident, people in Wat Kate were jointly commented on the impact of Chiang Mai Town Planning draft by sending letters of complaint to the offices that must be responsible in order to inform them to understand the problem and find solutions together. Wat Kate villagers also suggested that all process needed to be transparent in the management and the participation of the villagers, not only from the government or administration side. The main idea of Wat Kate villagers was Wat Kate district land use should be diagonal yellow and white. That means it is the area for habitat and conservation.

As a result of participation in the management of the Wat Kate villagers, it made Office of Chiang Mai Public Works and Planning improved land use area around Wat Kate district to be diagonal yellow and white. So it is the victory of the villagers.(PBS, 2013, para. 1)

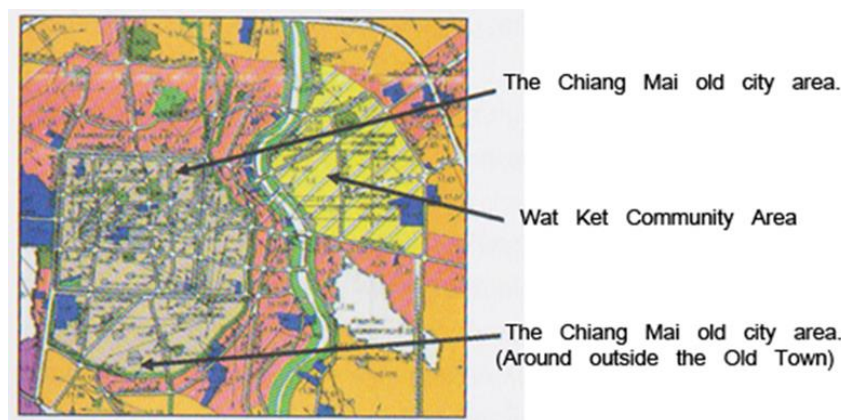


Figure 4 The present Chiang Mai land-use plan 2008 (third revision) after revision

Source: The Story of Chiang Mai Urban Planning (2015) Edited by Researcher

Wat Ket Community is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community, consisting of Chinese, Thai, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and others that live relying on each other. There is no religious discrimination in the community. The community has cross-cultural marriages, such as Buddhist with Muslim. This creates a strong bond between Muslim families and Buddhist families. So when it comes to the community's meetings, they can always share their ideas and information freely in order to contribute to the community together.

Because they had lived together for a long time, they learned each other's traditions, ways of life, and their religious activities. For example, there will be the sound of Islam's morning call to prayer coming from the mosque that might annoy the newcomers but not the locals. They are used to it and it has already become a part of their normal daily life.

The strength of the community also comes in large measure from school. The residents of the community go to the same school. They are bonded via school activities. There was a meeting between the government and the community, when a representative from the community was Khun Voravimon Chairat, who is the governor's wife. Therefore, this has made it easy to communicate between what might usually be seen as two opposing parties. The voice of the community was successfully heard by the government.

At Wat Ket Community, each religion comprises religious leaders to communicate with the community. There is also a community leader who links everything in the community. So for Muslims there is the Imam, a widely respected Muslim leader who spreads Muslim tenets to the community. The Imam negotiates for any argument in the community. These leaders will end the argument as fast as possible. There will be no feud after the situation. The Imam is considered as the elder of the community, who is highly reliable and would be able to negotiate and compromise on various issues without causing any conflicts in the community. This position is not an official position in the community but everyone would widely accept this person as the strong and wise representative of the Muslim community. From the interview with the Imam, it was found that he is very powerful and that he has the right to change the religious representative of the community himself. He is a true native resident of Wat Ket community who has known Wat Ket all his life and has been watching over the changes of the Wat Ket community for years. He cherishes the community resources with all his might and he would try his best to lead Wat Ket into being a prosperous community by fixing things which were not right for the community.

For Buddhists, the religious leader can be no one other than the Abbot, Ket Karam, who can dictate to the people in the community who are Buddhists. However, there is also another community leader who works as a coordinator between religions. We might say that he is a medium, not the true leader for the community, since his work for the community may already be loaded and, in a sense, compromised.

There will also be an "upper-class civilian" who drives government-related issues and presents them to the community. These upper-class civilians are merchants or who come from wealthy families or are educated scholars.

For Christians, there will always be religious leaders of the church. The religious leaders of the Christian society of Wat Ket have been just a few people who have subsequently moved to the outer ring of the town, but still there were a few traditional community leaders who reside in the area to coordinate issues. When there is trouble or any assembly going on, there will be a meeting at First Christian Church Chiang Mai which is easily accessible.

We can see that the community can be united as one without any religious clashes. This creates great cooperation between different religions, open to multiple cultural diversity in order to make a strong community.

Reasons behind Wat Ket success

Further lessons to be drawn from the Wat Ket case relate to reasons for the community's success. Crucially, the people were able to form a strong community in response to the road expansions and condominiums plan that would have expropriated the Sikhs' Temple, the Christian Church and the Buddhist Temple. Stealing away these resources would have destroyed the community, a reality that was recognized by all religio-ethnic groups, not least because they would all have been affected.

The people of the community value their own places. They cherish their places of residence and do not want to sell. Even though they somehow changed those places for some other form of business, from an old house to a café for example, still they will never sell it to the developers.

The residents in the community have great understanding towards each other. They decide and compromise on things respectfully with great teamwork and cooperation in order to provide activities that would implant good values in the people in order to live together peacefully in the same society. No matter what religion or culture they are from, the traditions they share have created strong bonds between people.

The community believes in its leaders, who have devoted themselves to the community, listening to all members of the community, concerned with the public benefits and able to find a solution for all matters for the community effectively, raising funds, achieving clean and honest procedures without any corruption. The role of strong *religious* leaders, who are also tolerant and compromising, is a special lesson emerging from Wat Ket, and raises a troubling question: is an absence of such tolerance and compromise to be seen as a factor in the inability in other situations to find bridges across difference?

The community has also received input from outside agencies as well. Most of the government agencies and private organizations have been agents to raise the awareness of the people in the community to gather together. The community wants to conserve their traditions and local knowledge in order to pass this down to their descendants, expecting that there would be more enhancements that would contribute to the traditions by letting outsiders spread yet further knowledge inside the community, including the knowledge that enables resistance and action. The role of outside agencies in assisting local communities to protect and enhance their traditions and culture is a common theme in Thai ethnographic studies.

Even though these procedures do not make everyone in the community rich, yet everyone could have a happier life. If the people were happy enough, the people of the community would cooperate with each other in order to create greater productivity and a stronger community such as through the Elders Caring Program whereby they would create tranquility for the community.

Conclusion



Figure 5 The academic support unit for public projects discusses with Wat Ket community.
(Researcher, 2016)

Wat Ket community has unique significance. An incomparable strength has formed within the community over a very long history. There is an “unbreakable bond” that connects the people from different ethnic groups and different religions by uniting them as one. . If there is a conflict, they will eventually solve the problem as soon as possible. These strengths and bonds were demonstrated through various activities of the community that have shown the values that people place on both the community and its physical fabric. Somehow, the community has managed to self-govern effectively. It is worth noting that Wat Ket’s unique characteristics have created a phenomenon that scholars from different institutes have come to observe and to join together as one thereby to help develop the community sustainably. Any strategies to develop the community to maintain cultural diversity in Wat Ket Community must be based on principles of equality. But due to the changes that can occur at any time, we could never predict how it is going to be in the future. The community is going to need to monitor conditions in both its immediate and wider environment to anticipate effects and consequences, thereby to prevent the problems that might occur. Community solidarity takes on special characteristics in the case of Wat Ket because of the community’s ethnic and religious diversity, demonstrating the potential role of leaders of each of the community’s groups. It also shows the diverse forms of leadership manifested in communities in Thailand.

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