

THE IMPACTS OF THE ENHANCING VALUE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. The conservation and enhancement project of traditional architecture in Amphawa and the regeneration plan for its floating market could serve as model for at least 20 communities in Thailand. Amphawa used to have once a very large floating market surrounded by orchards and coconut plantations. Since 1970 the development of the road network has changed the modes of transport and caused the gradual disappearance of this floating market related to regional food production. With this phenomenon, market gardening areas were abandoned while many inhabitants left. Many houses were abandoned. Despite this depression, Amphawa managed to retain its strong cultural identity thanks to the architecture of its pile dwellings, attached or isolated, mostly made from teak and set on the river, which created a remarkable urban landscape.

The residents, with the support of NGOs, have undertaken a project for the conservation of traditional houses and the regeneration of the floating market, which resulted in a newfound interest from the tourist for Amphawa: tourism figures rose to 1 million per year at present. The tangible and intangible heritage (performing arts, culinary arts and traditional confectionery) has helped revive crafts and enhanced the inhabited environment while generating an extra source of income for locals, thus bringing expatriates back to the area.

The example of Amphawa therefore constitutes par excellence a lesson learned example of great relevance, the success of which can serve as an operational reference regarding regional development.

Introduction

“Cultural heritage” is a term usually used to refer to a city’s resources to be used for tourism development and as economic driving force at the regional level, leading to the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of its neighboring towns or cities. Thus, the conservation and development of cultural heritage results in the restoration of such built environment as public buildings, housing and public areas, and the socio-economic improvement of cities such as the case of and Izmir in Tunisia (Güntü E. et al, 2011). Moreover, the conservation of cultural heritage helps add value to the culture and many indicators have been devised to assess various aspects of the cultural heritage such as social cost benefit analysis, planning balance sheet analysis, community impact assessment and others (Riganti P. and Nijkamp, P., 2011).

“Floating market” means the meeting place or central place in the junction of water network where boats carrying goods to be exchanged or sold. There are floating markets in river channels downstream and lakes in the South-east Asia, for example, Ywama in Inle Lake (Myanmar), Cai Rang, Phung Hiep and Cai Be in Vietnam, Don Manora, Thaka, Damneon Saduak, Wat Sai in Thailand. The floating market is a special type of cultural landscape of water-based communities that attract international tourists in this region.

This article presents another case namely “Amphawa”; a water-based community; 80 kilometer west of Bangkok, Thailand, a small municipality of about 5,000 population and the area of 2.5 km². The Faculty of Architecture has been working for 10 years with various organizations on conservation and revitalization of the cultural heritage.

Amphawa used to be an important floating market of the Mae Klong River since the late Ayuthaya Period (18th century) and the Rattanakosin Period (19th century). Since Amphawa was the birth place of King Rama II (1809-1824) and King Rama V (1868-1910) made two incognito visits to Amphawa, it is important in terms of history, culture, architecture and arts. (Figure 1) In the late 20th century, the road network was undertaken in that area; consequently, its importance as a market was lessened, resulting in more out-migration and more deteriorating houses. In 2003, the Thailand Cultural Environment Project (TCEP) was launched by the Office of the Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning, the Office of the Danish Academic Assistance (DANIDA), the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University and the Amphawa Municipality to conserve wooden houses along the canal (Figure 2). With the introduction of this project and the operation of the Amphawa Floating Market from Friday to Sunday since August, 2004, the Amphawa community gradually establishes itself as a tourist attraction. The conserved houses along the canal have been used as shops, homestays,

case study for architecture students, and information center to accommodate visitors. In addition, Ms. Prayong Nakhawarang, an Amphawa resident, donated her row-houses and her orchard on the Amphawa Canal to the Chaipattana Foundation. Consequently, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn; President of the foundation supported to renovate the houses and put them on tourism display in order to participate the revitalization process of Amphawa ; therefore, the Amphawa community is more widely known. Another factor that helps promote this community is a movie called 'Hom Rong', which features the life of Luang Pradit Pairoh; the Thai musician who was born in Amphawa and the media coverage also helps promote this community. As a result, it is one of the most popular cultural tourist destinations in Thailand since then. It is evidenced by more and more tourists visiting this community. Since 2008, there were more than 1 million visitors per year coming to this community (National Statistical Office, 2011), generating more income for Samut Songkhram Province. Eventually, the success of this community is a model for conservation and revival of other water-based



Figure 1
Scenery of the Amphawa Community



Figure 2
The Restoration of Traditional Architecture

communities nation-wide especially those in the Central Region.

Conservation Process of Traditional Architecture

To carry out the Thailand Cultural Environment Project (TCEP) 2003 – 2004, the project operators organized various activities including monthly meetings with representatives from the Amphawa Municipality, the related government agencies and the locals to identify problems, possibilities and needs of solving the problems. In addition, we have jointly mapped out the development vision of Amphawa Municipality as follows:

Amphawa is a municipality of history, culture, arts and eco-tourism which retains its unique water-based community and its cultural heritage based on King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Sufficiency Economy Development concept.'

The TCEP comprises such subprojects as awareness raising project, survey of cultural heritage project and demonstration project for architectural conservation whose principle of 50% matching funds between the DANIDA and the building owners is applied.

Most of the 350 buildings lining the Amphawa Canal are wooden row-houses, vernacular houses, traditional Thai houses and concrete row-houses, 17 of which were received 50% financial support for restoration by the TCEP during 2003-2004. In 2008, the project was granted the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards. The committee praised that:

“The restoration of the traditional Amphawa Canal Community has successfully achieved public-private cooperation in the safeguarding of heritage structures in Thailand. With co-funding from the local government and Denmark, the project has benefited from the active support of the local residents and homeowners and the guidance of Chulalongkorn University. The project has conserved numerous historic buildings of local significance and retained the traditional canal-side urban morphology, which is under threat around the country. The project demonstrates a recognition of the cultural significance of Amphawa and an appreciation of both the architectural and living heritage of the historic canal community”

From 2008 to 2010, more than 80 buildings were renovated by their owners and have been used as shops selling souvenirs and food and beverages as well as home-stays. According to the 2010 survey, out of 39 buildings in the Amphawa Municipality area

which are used as accommodation for tourists, 27 are home-stays and 12 are resorts and most of them are in fruit orchards (Wilawan Phamornsuan, 2010). Before 2003, there was only one place for tourists to stay in this province. The religious institutes such as Amphawanjetiyaram Temple, Phrayayat Temple and Phumarin Kudithong Temple are renovated and King Rama II Memorial Park is also restored to serve tourism purposes.

Since visitors would like to stay overnight here after watching fireflies at night, the house owners have adapted their houses to home-stays, accounting for 70% of the accommodation for visitors available in Amphawa. Furthermore, the local administrations and the residents help promote this kind of accommodation.

Heritage and Tourism Development

The management of the tourism in Amphawa stems from the TCEP meetings. The residents agreed that the Amphawa Floating Market should be revived since it used to be the biggest market of the Mae Klong River and the Amphawa community abounds with fruit trees such as pomelo, lychee and coconut and also aquatic and marine animals such as Mae Klong mackerel. It can be concluded that this community is equipped with raw and fresh materials to be sold at lower prices. Moreover, the residents are good at cooking. Thus, it is ideal to hold a floating market selling food and fruit during weekends and holidays. The residents paddle their boats laden with food, fruits or flowers from their garden and sell them to visitors. They carry only small amount of what they are going to sell. This is a small business and the residents are happy to do so. This is in line with the Sufficiency Economy concept. This concept is fundamental to empower and building resilience for communities introduced by King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Chaipattana Foundation, 2011).

The Amphawa Municipality together with the residents organizes the Amphawa Floating Market, an afternoon market while the Damneon Saduak Floating Market in Ratchaburi Province is a morning market which is internationally known. The afternoon market provides some benefits that the vendors can have time in the morning to prepare what they are going to sell in the afternoon. Since there are many rivers and canals meet in the Amphawa areas, visitors can take a boat trip to go sightseeing, pay respect to the Lord Buddha image at many temples along the water network, visit orchards and watch fireflies which can be seen from the rainy season to winter.

Economic Impacts

The conservation of the buildings and the revival of the floating market have resulted in a better living condition for locals. Some can pay off their debts while some earn more income by taking tourists for sightseeing, others by selling food and sweets and handicraft such as the Benjarong five-colored ceramics, products from coconut shell. These are small-scaled businesses which the residents learn to perform. Because of such activities, more local products have been developed and there is more employment. The tourism also brings about more consumption of agricultural goods and marine and other aquatic animals in Amphawa. Such agricultural goods are coconut, pomelo, lychee, mango, rose apple, sapodilla and longan. As a result, they can fetch higher prices and their

Figure 3 Socio-economic Revitalization in Amphawa



Floating market

Seafood on boat

Fruits on boat

breeds have been improved for quality yields.

In 2007, 558,326 visitors came to Amphawa, 132,307 of whom stayed overnight and 426,019 were day trippers. Most of them were Thai and it was estimated that they spent almost 600 million baht in 2009 (Office of Education Council, 2010). Their expenditure went to products and souvenirs, food and beverages, transportation and accommodation within the province. (Figure 3)

As for accommodation, after the development of the Amphawa community, many types of them are available. Since the revival of the floating market in 2004, the accommodation had increased from 18 places with 218 rooms to 150 places with 1,620 rooms in 2009 due to the boat trip to watch fireflies in the evening (Department of Tourism, 2011).

Furthermore, in 2003, the average income per head in Samut Songkhram Province was 10,219 baht a year, which was quite low, but in 2009, it rose to 14,363 baht a year, an increase by about 7% per year. After

the implementation of the TCEP project, the Gross Province Product has increased mostly because of the following sectors: financial services, agriculture, industrial products and construction, which correspond to the increasing number of tourists. (the National Socio-economic Development Board, 2011) In 2003, 127,120 tourists visited the King Rama II Park, during which the project was not launched but in 2009, there were 272,828 visitors. The figure proved that after the implementation of the TCEP project, the figure was doubled. (The King Rama II Memorial Foundation under the Royal Patronage, 2010).

Figure 4 Cultural revitalization



Mask dance



Thai music



Puppet show

Social and Cultural Impacts

The project witnessed the revival of local age-old traditions and the conservation of indigenous culture such as the floating of a string of tiny baskets made of banana stalk, the giving of alms to monks traveling by boats, the revival of traditional cookery, the performance of traditional Thai music, the show of Khon masked dance, puppet show and the development of local handicraft.

Model of community conservation

The success of TCEP conservation project in Amphawa became a model that can attract many groups of communities all over the country coming to visit and learn this experience on site. After the study trip a number of them adapted this model to their communities.

All in all, it can be said that the Amphawa market sets

from other areas offer the landlords more incentives and some of them decided to sell their houses or rent them at higher fees. The current renters, therefore, have to move out since they cannot afford higher rental fees. On the contrary, those who are allowed to rent row-houses owned by the Chaipattana Foundation still pay reasonable rental fees.

Figure 5 Floating markets and canalside market revitalization



Bang Noi market

Ayothaya floating market

Rangsit floating market

the trend for community conservation and regeneration especially old markets and old floating markets on the riverside or canalside as well as new private floating markets or designed old markets in other provinces nationwide. According to the preliminary survey, after the revival of the Amphawa Floating Market in August 2004, 20 markets (old markets on the river banks, old floating markets and new floating markets) have been developed until now. They are Bann Mai Market, Chachoengsao Province, Khlong Lad Plee Market, Ratchaburi Province, Bang Plee Floating Market, Samut Prakarn Province, Bang Khla Floating Market, Chachoengsao Province, Khlong Hae Market, Songkhla Province, Bang Noi Floating Market and Bang Nok Khwag Market, Samut Songkhram Province and Nakorn Neung Khet Market, Chachoengsao Province, etc.

The introduction of the TCEP project and related project can produce more jobs and number of those who moved out has come to resettle down in the community. Many family members who still work in Bangkok or other big cities also return home during weekend to help their family to run their small-scale business.

As for properties, the tourism development affects those who rent houses on the canal because investors

Conclusion

The conservation and revitalization of the Amphawa Community was an ongoing process implemented by the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, the Amphawa Municipality and other related agencies. The project results in dramatic changes in the community. Once a small secluded community, the Amphawa community is an important cultural tourist attraction. Not only the community itself but also its region experiences physical, economic, social and cultural changes.

In short, it can be said that this is a successful process even though some problems arise and its success is considered a model for the conservation of old communities in Thailand. The authors strongly confirm that the value-added cultural heritage resulting from its conservation process causes changes in not only the physical and socio-economic aspects at the community level but also the development at the regional level.

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