

DRIVEN-MECHANISM FOR LOCAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION: SAMSHUK OLD MARKET DISTRICT, SUPHANBURI, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Samshuk old market district typically expresses how, in our grand (grand) father generation, the commercial area had been settled and evolved and it represents the unique architectural and urban character where had existed in many canal-based cities overall the central region of Thailand. Nowadays, influenced by modernization, many of them have been changed and demolished. To survive such a built environment, local community at Samshuk has rigorously attempted promoting out the conservation and heritage agenda to public sphere. This attempt has brought some positive changes – the emerging mechanisms to survive local heritage. The paper would discuss on two issues. Firstly, it is the supporting mechanism appeared since many inputs and activities have been addressed, but chaotic and unorganized. Based on the authors' direct experiences and participatory observation as well as action, there have been three levels of mechanism embracing and steering conservation process. Secondly, therefore, the bridging networks and partnerships among local and district authorities, professional/academic institutes, and NGOs, have become a platform of long-term working mechanism on which the conservation plan relies. We hope that this illustrated scenario could be, somehow a small step to begin on local heritage protection and shed the further light as another experience to locally initiate the urban and architectural conservation and could be contributed to conservation paradigm and theory, especially in Third World country's local political context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Heritage conservation paradigm could be explained in a multiplicity of parameters among epistemological multidisciplinary movements, such as, identity of place [1], tourism activity [2], and cultural capital [3]. Likewise, collaborative planning is one of the approaches highlighted by many prominent scholars, particularly in the field of urban conservation planning. According to the mentioning parameters, they could be employed as the principal factors and methodologies.

Based on collaborative approach, this paper aims to explain the phenomenon of heritage conservation via Samshuk Old Market, Thailand. The paper is organised into four parts. The first addresses on the context of case study in both of spatial and procedural problems. The second analyses the case through

communicative concept [4] and multi-stakeholder process [5]. Then, the third elaborates more on the level of driven-mechanisms for conservation, being categorized into three fundamental scales – community, city and network, and policy-making. Eventually, the nature of communicative action, dynamic structure, and multi-mechanisms would be discussed as the conclusion.

2. CONTEXT OF THE CASE STUDY

2.1 The decline of market attraction

Approximately last 1890s, Samshuk historical market had been flourished as one of central districts of Suphanburi, middle region of Thailand. Having been investigated via the storyline of forefathers, the community history could be conceived as a sharp-developed society, not merely on commercial activities but also historic and cultural diversities. The value of Samshuk Old Market has been represented by embraced both tangible and intangible aspects.

Considering on its evolution and change, the local economic activities at the inner market during last decade were gradually decreased by at least three factors. First is that the government district regeneration projects had been undertaken. The governmental offices – police station, primary school administration, and state property, which had been the essential economic activities contributed to the old market were relocated. This magnetic absence became one of the negative presumable impacts, affecting to local commercial liveliness.

Secondly, in the wealthy era, the water-based market was an elemental nexus that links central district of Samshuk to other markets as a commercial network. In recent year, the river accessibility has been rarely occupied and replaced by motor vehicle-based transportation, the highway. The role of commercial hub in the old market has, therefore, continuously been deteriorated.

Thirdly, by a macro economic failure of Thailand and Asian region in 1997, it was the outpouring impact, not merely to Samshuk but nation-widely. The serious economic drawback had been caused initiating a market alternative, especially *caravan market*. It has become a significant impetus encouraging the high competition in local market. Consequently, Samshuk old market, having been unattractive, failed to compete the *caravan market*.

2.2 Procedural barrier

By procedural barrier, two arguments are analysed. Firstly, due to discursive definition of conservation concept in Thailand, the circumstance had brought to a confrontation among controversial stakeholders, particularly the state and local community. Hillier and Hajer claimed that a discourse is one of momentous factors to people's understanding of their own issues in consensus-building processes [6]. Also, it could possibly be the bureaucratic apparatus in the game of power.

The second presumable controversy, the unbalanced structure in consensus-building mechanism, is one of greatest impediments for implementation. According to Zunino [7], the level of mechanism would be categorised into three scales; policy-making, co-ordination, and operation level. In the case of Samshuk, it seems that the co-operation and operation could effectively handle a plenty of problems in community. Meanwhile, the policy-making movement is still likely to be a significant obstruction of the process because of its poor bureaucratic system and the absence of authentic public participation to the policy-making arena.

3. FROM COMMUNITY TO INSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT

3.1 Communicative action approach

To tackle such a complex conflict in the community, Samshuk Old Market Development Committee [SOMDC] has created many magnificent activities which could, therein, progress to the conceptualisation of revitalisation. Amid the stakeholders, the communicative action movement could narrow the gap among them – local residents, state officers, and scholars. In this regard, the local reconciliation had been addressed through interpersonal activity, social learning, and mutual assessment [8].

Being relevant to an antagonism in conceptualisation of community conservation, social learning and communicative action were exercised by the heuristic mean, via debating, discussing, brainstorming, and negotiating. By debating, a few informal meetings among multi-stakeholders were initiated by SOMDC and three mobilised groups, sub-committee, were formulated and also mandated to investigate the local history, to create revitalising activities, and to promote local economic development.

Hence, by the community level, the local history, narration of storylines, and architecture had fundamentally facilitated on historical assessment and shed the further light on the regeneration programme as well as the regulatory amendment. Having been unsupportive by policy-making level, the institutional outcome, for instances, conservation guideline and building control, have been impermeable into the municipal regulation although the principle of knowledge-based planning has been dialogued. Fortunately, it could potentially be community self-regulated as the social norm. In conclusion, the local conservation, herein, is tentatively defined from local and experienced knowledge instead of expert and administrative skills.

As far as revitalising activities are concerned, it is possible that there is a turning point of people mindset. Actually, a former procedure of the old market revitalisation had not been likely to integrate the conservation approach. Later on, SOMDC as sub-mechanism stepped forward through many momentous activities, such as, food festival, historic safari and rally, local historic forum, community cleaning day, and so forth. Thereby, the benefit of such a movement directly

accomplished flourishing economic and tourism betterment by approaching heritage capital's concept.

3.2 Multi-stakeholder process

In the last 1990s, many pundits in the field of urban planning, sociology and politics constituted the multi-stakeholder processes. Evidentially, the public policy studies have been increasingly concentrated in Europe, the United States, and Canada [9]. The three aspects derived from Hillier's concept [10] – representation, actor-network, consensus building, would be deliberated and discussed.

Hillier portrayed the terms of representation that they are not merely the type, but also the coverage of cultural and social capital whichever they should be related. In the case study, in the previous time, most of the representations were elected by local administration and associated to several actors, especially state officers and experts instead of the community residents. Thus, it seemed that the preliminary driven mechanism is malfunctioned because of its incapability to comprehend the common problems of community. Thereby, the agency formation had been evolved and transformed into the community-based driven process accompanying the client (residents) rather than the bureaucracy and by this moment, it has been more efficient tackling the prevalent troubles in achieving local heritage conservation ever since the 1997's economic drawback.

The second, the actor network, based on Hillier's work, is depicted into two basic aspects. Firstly, the issue-based network is both the core-driven mechanism and social learning. In Samshuk case, the nucleus of mobilisation, consisted of SOMDC, local and external scholars, and NGOs, was a vigorous movement to refresh the liveliness of the old market. Otherwise, secondly, the policy network that three-fourth of partnership is state agency, would be centrally a crucial function of consensus-building process. According to network movement in this study, the authors would claim that either the former or latter network should be the multi-level layer that contains dynamic, discursive, flexible, and changeable form.

Ultimately, three chief characters of relationship in the power arena are examined based on consensus-building, social learning, and the possibility of financial support. Figure 1 is revealing the actors in several clusters. One of the significant interactions is social learning which generally took place within the issue-based network. Also, these correlations benefited to reconciliation among controversial stakeholders, in particular local community and state agency. Moreover, Figure 1 recapitulates that the consensus-building and financial support are tools in the game of negotiation in public sphere especially in the realm of policy-based networks. Nevertheless, the community representation is the fine-grained function to sort out the conflict from both networks

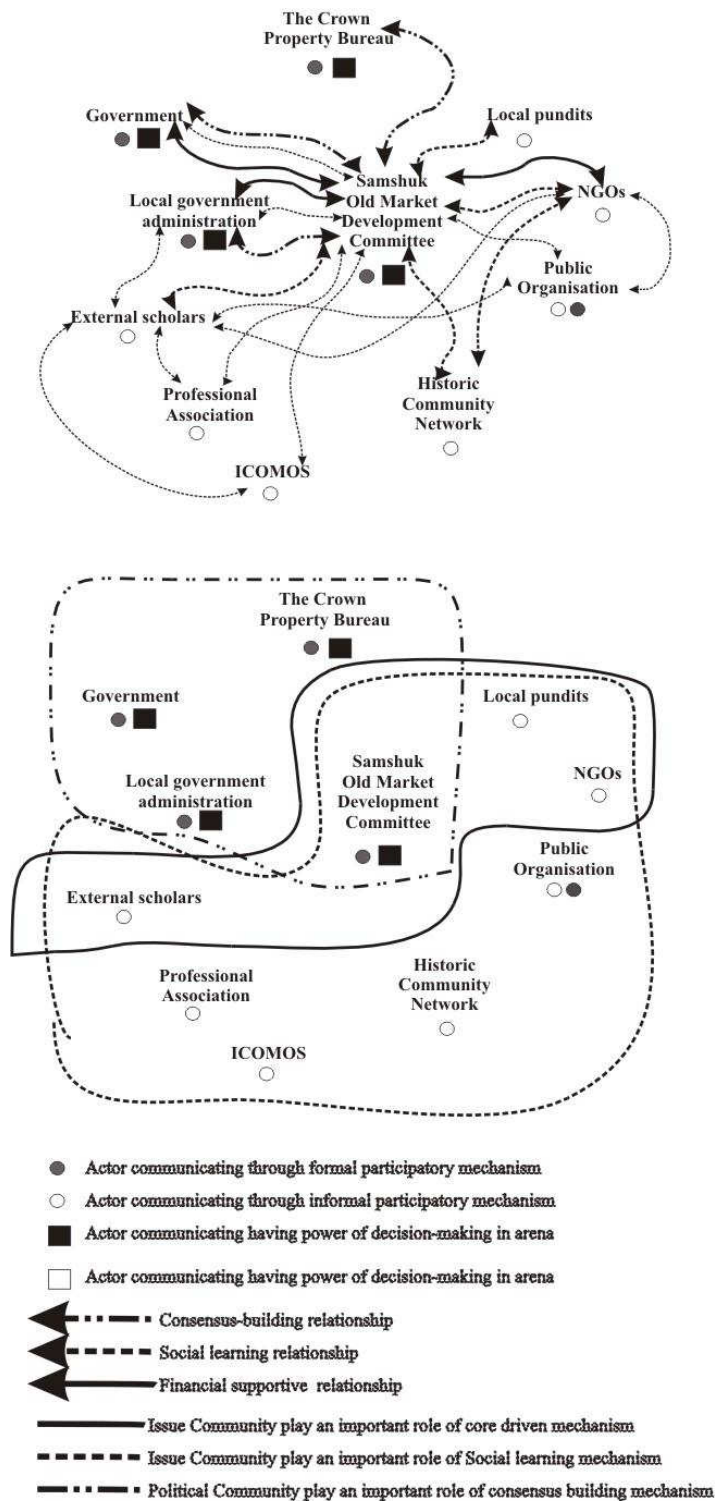


Figure1: Relationship among actors (upper) and driven-mechanism (lower) in heritage conservation at Samshuk Old Market Community, Thailand

4. MULTI-LEVEL BASED DRIVEN MECHANISMS FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

4.1 Community-based mechanism

Nigel Thrift [11] had summarised the institutional concepts referring Bourdieu and Sztompha hypothesis. For Bourdieu, the institution is scanned into three parameters – culture, structure, and power. Meanwhile, Sztompha had focused on the relationship between structure and agency-praxis system. Regarding the community-based approach, it could be postulated that both concepts, synthesised by pivotal parameters, influence to local heritage conservation. Eventually, this celebrating circumstance has been because of the marvellous community culture and diversity of agencies.

4.2 Citywide-based mechanism

Concerning with citywide processes, the nexus of consensus building and fellowship was a part of this important impetus. The former was organised as an apparatus of bargaining, negotiating, arguing, and discussing among multi-stakeholders. Simultaneously, the latter was mobilised via the knowledge-based and mutual learning movement. Obviously, from Figure 1, the consensus-building network probably interweaves in a formal interaction, meanwhile, the webs of fellowship are likely to be an informal structure.

4.3 Policy making-based mechanism

In the case of Samshuk, it is seemingly that neither the multi-level mechanism in community and citywide process nor the policy making-based movement could mechanise because of the limited governance culture in Thai society. Although, the grassroots or bottom-up mechanism has been overcoming several limitations and has been locally intertwined the conservation methodology, yet, the upper structure still dominates and is trapped in the traditional bureaucratic culture. Consequently, the authorizing power could not be fully delegated into local and community level and therefore, the outcome of the conservation planning in this case is merely a project-based conservation, not a political movement.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Nature of communicative action and social learning

Even if the social learning and communicative action approach were remarkably underpinned in a *priori* practice encouraging the community revitalization, notwithstanding, it was probably that stunning activities are fairly decreased in the coming year because it becomes reluctant, repetitive, and monotonous, which could not attract the people interest. The familiarity is a dilemma in the communicative approach. As a result, it can possibly underpin as much as undermine the activity atmosphere. Frequency, style, and the patterns of behaviour should be reconsidered and also be refreshed for the atmospheric

betterment to fascinate the people. In short, the activities organised for social and conservation momentums would not be annual corny programmes

4.2 Dynamic and nebulous structure

To deal with the complexities of post-modern society, the forms of mechanism should be in dynamic and nebulous structure. Flexibility of system could encourage more on the wide-range of stakeholders to share idea in conservation planning direction instead of merely being the representations. Hence, it could, perhaps, conceived that the new configuration of system and structure should be three dimensions interactive [3D interactive] – horizontal, vertical, and diagonal. The authors would wed the *3D Network* concept that, somehow, could amend the asymmetry structure of power in consensus-building and negotiation.

4.3 Multilevel-based mechanism

In conclusion, Samshuk case has illustrated that the historical area should be focused not only on the physical aspect, but the hidden agenda in public interests should be simultaneously scrutinized as well. This investigation, therefore, recapitulates that the multilevel-based driven mechanism should accompany in the conservation process regarding the complexity of decision-making power beyond the heritage site. As Healey [12] claimed that “*spatial is the generally arena to exercise the power*”. Although it is not yet the time to encounter the unbalance of power structure, but the conservation planners and practitioners must be anxious on these issues.

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