ความไม่ลงรอยในเมืองเก่ากรุงเทพ : มรดก การท่องเที่ยว และเจนตริฟิเคชัน

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บทคัดย่อ

ความไม่ลงรอย เป็นลักษณะโดยธรรมชาติที่สำคัญอย่างหนึ่งของมรดกที่พบโดยทั่วไปในการอนุรักษ์และการจัดการสิ่งแวดล้อมทางประวัติศาสตร์ บทความนี้ตั้งคำถามในเรื่องผลประโยชน์ด้านคุณค่าทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมของการอนุรักษ์ชุมชนเมืองจากการเข้าแทรกแซงโดยการท่องเที่ยวและปรากฏการณ์เจนตริฟิเคชันในย่านประวัติศาสตร์ของกรุงเทพมหานครในประเทศไทย ซึ่งเป็นแหล่งมรดกมีชีวิตที่กำลังดิ้นรนเพื่อรับมือกับ "คุณค่าในตัวผู้คน" ของเมืองนี้เอง ความขัดแย้งด้านสังคมและการเมือง และด้านกฎหมายบนสิ่งที่เรียกว่าอาคารมรดกของ "เมืองเก่ากรุงเทพ" ได้ถูกนำมาค้นหาผ่านชุมชนกรณีศึกษาสามแห่ง คือ ป้อมมหากาฬ เลื่อนฤทธิ์ และบางลำพู กรณีเหล่านี้เป็นตัวแทนแสดงถึงความไม่ลงรอยด้านมรดกที่ชุมชนมีต่อหน่วยงานรัฐ ต่อเจ้าของที่ดิน และภายในชุมชนเอง ทั้งการท่องเที่ยวและเจนตริฟิเคชันเป็นแรงผลักดันหลักของความขัดแย้งในบริบทนี้ ซึ่งไม่ได้ถูกอ้างถึงเพื่อกล่าวโทษแต่เพื่อขยายความในสิ่งที่ยังเข้าใจไม่ถูกต้องเกี่ยวกับคุณค่ามรดก ซึ่งสามารถนำไปใช้ร่วมกับนโยบายแบบรับคำสั่งจากเบื้องบนและการจัดการที่ไม่สนใจประเด็นละเอียดอ่อน เพื่อเห็นแก่การปกป้องรักษาความสำคัญทางวัฒนธรรมของแหล่งมรดกจึงสมควรมีนโยบายและแผนซึ่งมุ่งจัดการประเด็นคุณค่าทางสังคมซึ่งสั่งสมและงอกเงยจากตัวผู้คนในแหล่ง เพื่อให้บรรลุถึงธรรมาภิบาลด้านการอนุรักษ์ชุมชนเมืองและการจัดการมรดกที่มีความเหมาะสมและยั่งยืน

Dissonant heritage

Heritage, at its most basic meaning, represents the thing that we want to keep[1]. Other relevant questions then come from this point, such as who are 'we' and 'whose heritage' it is[2]. An undeniable truth within this argument, though, is that 'few societies are so homogenous that no divided heritage sense exists'[3]:

> […] At its simplest, all heritage is someone's heritage and therefore logically not someone else's: the original meaning of an inheritance implies the existence of disinheritance and by extension any creation of heritage from the past disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially […][4]

Dissonance is therefore universal; it is a condition of all heritage to some degree[5]. Economic uses of heritage, especially the tourism market, distinctively mark the significance of dissonant heritage. Nonetheless, effects of dissonance in heritage are far more widespread, involving the aspects of culture/ethnicity (e.g. race, religion, language), social dimensions (e.g. class, gender, sexual orientation, disability), human geographical contexts (e.g. migration, urban diversity), and political ideology[6].

Tourism

Arguably a major factor in the growth of the heritage tourism industry has been a surge to preserve everything from the past and describe it as heritage[7]. The treatment of historical resources as heritage products endows those products with tensions and dilemmas, which are inherent in all forms of 'cultural' commodification for contemporary markets[8]. Some uses of heritage strongly favor generalisation. Tourism, in particular, requires the reduction of a rich and complex past to a set of easily recognisable characteristics[9]. A 'homogeneous heritage' therefore satisfies a homogeneous market but disinherits those excluded social, ethnic and regional groups, thus creating dissonances[10].

Tourism development that is solely driven by economic/commercial imperatives, from both the public and private sectors as well as tourist demand, often comes to the position that it gradually destroys the valuable resources of a place – a process which is defined as 'market failure'[11]. Visiting a heritage place where people still live, like a historic town, is a pleasurable experience of leisure and cultural activity; however, it is not just the physical qualities but also the 'life' within them that is attractive to visitors[12]. Hence, one should be aware that the importance of the social value of a heritage place has become largely ignored or misinterpreted among various approaches and concepts within urban conservation and heritage management, as well as tourism development.

Urban conservation

In the field of urban conservation, it has been suggested that each case deals, in varying degrees, with 'physical conservation' and 'social conservation'[13]. It could be further argued that urban conservation has three dimensions: physical, spatial and social, in which all three are 'interrelated and overlap, in context and in the responsibilities of key players' and 'encompassed within the fourth dimension of time…for a city as a living organism is never complete'[14]. The social dimension, however, has been significantly emphasised for the reason that:

[…] the social dimension of urban conservation is the most difficult to define, but arguably the most important, as continuity in conservation can only be achieved through the continuation of urban life […][15]

Holistically thinking, urban conservation serves four main objectives: cultural memory, successful proxemics, environmental diversity, and economic gain[16]. These objectives address collective gains to the cultural resources of a community from investment in rehabilitation, which also 'produce a higher market value for the improved property'[17]. However, the market value may lead to the functional restructuring of the area's economic base, including the displacement of existing functions and users of traditional activities, as shown in the process of gentrification[18]. It thus brings the successful proxemics into focus, which concern 'the relationship between people, the activities they engage in, and the places where they perform these activities' as well as 'the sense of town or neighbourhood identity'[19].

Gentrification

Gentrification implies a process that involves displacement of the lower/working class people by the middle class or rich/powerful people. It generally defines a process whereby urban poor neighborhoods are transformed by the rich, especially the replacement or improvement of old buildings. Gentrification of a neighborhood often results in increasing rent and property values, through which poorer residents and local shops are gradually pulled out. It helps to describe the unjust social aspects of physical improvement and neighborhood revitalisation[20]. Historically, gentrification started out in the inner city areas, but at times has spread out everywhere - even in rural areas of developing countries. It is strongly associated with regeneration and tourism in the global context[21], including 'the new urban colonialism'[22], which has significant social impacts.

Arguably, gentrification is hardly an explicit part of policy and planning but is nevertheless detectable in practices, especially when it infers conflicts between social classes. The concept originally started with 'residential gentrification' of inner city areas[23] then diversified according to the dynamism of the global context, for example, 'commercial gentrification' (i.e. the middle-class shops and services replace those affordable to local residents) or 'functional gentrification' (i.e. a higher value use or function displaces a lower one[24]), 'tourism gentrification' (i.e. tourist facilities replace those accessible to the locals[25]) and 'institutional gentrification' (i.e. redevelopment dedicated to the structure or 'image' of the government or important institutions[26]). The concept of 'new urban revanchism' or 'revanchist' public policy[27] links gentrification to its political aspects, which describes development policies that spatially discriminate people by class and race through the process of displacement - encouraged, initiated and approved by authorities. Although originated in the western context, the incidents are widespread in developing countries, where space symbolises the power of ruling class and institution.

Heritage management

At both the national and local scales, different recognitions of the same heritage may be influenced by the institutional and political identity, usually invented by the elite class of society[28]. This can be ascribed as 'feelings of patriotism' at the national level, and 'memories of a community' at the local level[29]. Conflicts commonly occur between key players in the conservation and tourism of historic towns. Key decision

makers in this situation include the national government and their policies), local government, local public sector officials (i.e. local policy makers and professionals), professionals and consultants, non-governmental organisations, social agencies, the private sector and residents/communities. These players often address issues from various directions, priorities and agendas, meaning that at times conflicts and tension are inevitable[30].

Aspects of conflict between the central and local governments are normally based on policy and control, such as the distribution of tax revenue and budget allocation, or disagreements between national and municipal legislations. A national government and its centralised policies can sometimes be damaging rather than helpful to local needs and issues. National policies as applied to local politics for development with short-term, quick, and visible results - often closely linked to election dates - can potentially overpower the interests of small communities and the economies that support them[31]. These should be concerned with urban qualities, by which conservation in developing countries should recognise 'a continuing link to a traditional way of life, which has been lost in developed western cultures' as well as the existence of 'thriving informal economic activity…the continuing significance of religion and belief in urban life'[32].

Conflicts are also likely to arise because of the differences between professional duties and political aims, as well as from power struggles among elected local governments or between authorities with competing agendas, policies, priorities, and legislations, for example, health and safety policy concerning proper sanitation, rather than safeguarding of historic property[33]. In the following cases of dissonant heritage in Bangkok Old Town, the conflicts occur between the community and the authority, the community and the landlord, and within the community itself.

Bangkok Old Town in dissonance

'Bangkok Old Town' in this article refers to the urban historic quarters of Bangkok (also known as Krung Thep), the capital city of the Kingdom of Thailand since 1782. For conservation and management initiatives, the area is often referred to as the Ancient City of Rattanakosin (or 'Krung Rattanakosin').

Since the late 1970s, Bangkok Old Town has been under the government's conservation policy. The conservation plan of Bangkok Old Town was formulated by the central government's 'Committee for Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin and Old Towns'. The 'city beautiful' concept, which emphasises visual accessibility of significant monuments, was also adopted by the long-standing elite-class members of the Committee[34]. During the 1980s and 1990s, a series of building control regulations were enacted and in 1994 the conservation master plan was approved. According to this master plan, buildings that were constructed after the nineteenth century were to be demolished and replaced by open spaces. However, these rigid and socially insensitive proposals have hardly been implemented due to property ownership complications[35].

The first wave of gentrification came during the early 1990s[36] in the form of commercial gentrification, such as restaurants with art galleries and social events, targeting university students and middle-class professionals, accompanied by a few cases of residential gentrification such as a book shop with a residential unit upstairs. The second wave, tourism gentrification, came in the 2000s with guesthouses, internet cafés, pubs and restaurants, and other facilities that catered towards visitors in the adjacent areas of the tourist district generally known as 'Khao San' (see Figure 1). Following the first wave of gentrification,

when newcomers often regenerated and conserved a number of historic properties without support from the authorities or landlords, several community regeneration projects were also operated by the local government, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), in collaboration with major landlords such as the Crown Property Bureau.

During the 1990s, the provision of the 'elites' came into force in an attempt to 'cleanse' the inner city of the local communities and 'their cultures'[37]. The resulting conservation plan (or 'master plan') threatened to turn Bangkok Old Town into a theme park, and the local communities have been battling against it ever since. One of the communities that directly opposed the demolition and relocation guidelines of the master plan was Tha Tian (see Figure 1), a 490-unit collection of shophouses with a market and river pier located near the Grand Palace. It instead went through a revitalisation project with the BMA, who hired a planning school to study the revitalisation of Tha Tian. This happened because of the realities of local politics, including financial constraints and attempts to maintain the number of votes[38]. The cultural significance of the area was also recognised by the Fine Arts Department (FAD), which later on registered the property as a monument in 2002[39]. However, at the same time some other settlements were demolished and relocated, such as the Phra Sumeru Fortress with residents in its grounds (since 1999 an open space and waterfront recreational area managed by the BMA), arguably benefiting the visitors and gentrifiers more than the local residents of the area[40].
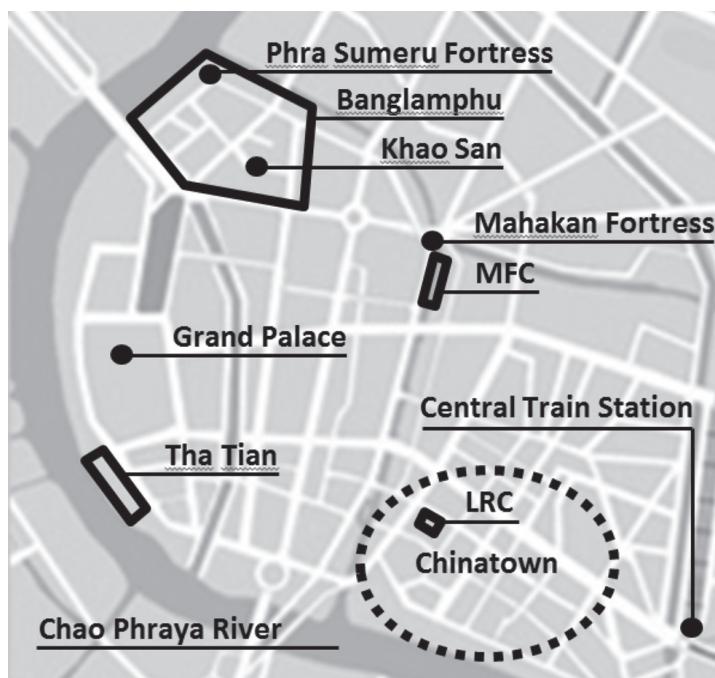

Figure 1 : A conceptual map of Bangkok Old Town shows the three case study communities of Mahakan Fortress (MFC), Luan Rit (LRC) and Banglamphu.

Authority vs. community

In the conservation/development process, 'not only do built and natural environments need to be safeguarded, but so do the communities which inhabit them'[41]. The traditional living settlements of Bangkok Old Town, unlike its heritage monuments and sites such as palaces, temples and other significant historic buildings, are largely neglected by the conservation 'master plan' that failed to play important roles in the maintenance of the 'sense of place'[42]. The Mahakan Fortress Community (MFC), an inhabited stripe of land between the historic moat and the remains of the city wall in Krung Rattanakosin, has been battling (in court) with the BMA since 1992, when the expropriation decree demanded that the residents relocate from the historic site to create an open space to attract tourists[43].

The Mahakan Fortress (see Figure 1) has been listed as a national monument since 1949, under the Act of Ancient Sites, Ancient Objects, Artistic Objects and National Museums, amended in 1961 and 1992[44]. However, the living community in its heritage setting has never been valued or inscribed; it is thus ignored and according to the master plan all residents must be relocated. When the expropriation decree expired in 1996, only 16 properties were demolished with compensation to relocate, but 76 properties refused to go though they already accepted the compensation from the BMA[45]. The social/community network movements have encouraged the MFC that it has the right to stay, as inspired by some other successful negotiations of community revitalisation projects with the BMA.

In 2005 the new Governor of BMA, wishing to end this long dispute, thus initiated the living museum project with the MFC in the hope that the expropriation decree could be amended. A research team was also hired by the BMA to study the joint MFC-BMA project[46]. However, in 2005, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled against the MFC in their suit, seeking a withdrawal of the eviction order, leaving only the Governor's tentative proposal of the 30-year lease of the disputed land standing between the execution of the eviction order and the continuing existence of the community[47]. In 2007, the Council of the State ruled that the city could not use the plots for the living museum project, thus has to proceed with the eviction, demolition, and park construction, otherwise the city itself will be breaking the law[48]. The first house in the MFC was razed by the BMA in 2005[49]. The owners of the 28 properties had already been compensated and handed the titles over, but many former tenants of these houses refused to leave[50].

According to a survey in 2005, there were 47 properties of 270 residents (totaling 71 families) living in the MFC. Judging from the present legal status, they have neither the rights to the lands nor the properties, but some preliminary research appeared to justify their rights to stay[51]. The residents have no proof either of owning/purchasing or renting their properties/plots, which is why the Supreme Administrative Court ruled against them (on the basis that they had no right to battle in the court of justice). Those with the rights to the properties/plots but who had already accepted compensation from the BMA were also ordered by the court to leave immediately and their properties removed[52]. According to Prakitnonthakan[53], the BMA, now the owner of the land, could proceed with the living (or outdoor) museum project without any legal contradictions, since it would be for the 'citizens to use together' and 'especially preserved for the benefit of the country', as stated in the 'Legal Provision Concerning Public Space'. However, after the Council of the State ruled that the city could not do so, that the residents could not lease parts of such public space to reside, the BMA itself is facing the problem of compromising its obligation to evict, and so is looking for more positive legal alternatives[54].

The root of the problem, in the case of the MFC, lies with the administrative and legislative authorities who when issuing the conservation plan were only concerned with institutional and political identity - as defined by the elites who firstly ignored the value of the inhabitants as part of the heritage setting. The centralised conservation legislation in Thailand is another concern of the problem. The heritage management of the Fortress, like all designated monuments in Thailand, is solely empowered to the central government's Fine Arts Department (FAD). Hence, the lack of local (and local government) participation in conservation can be considered as an instrument of institutional/political gentrification and ineffective conservation process. Hence dissonance in heritage is inevitable, and the conflicts and contradictions in heritage management are absolutely exhausting, and still unsolvable, for both the local government and the community.

A new approach to valuing and managing living heritage, however, had been learnt and accepted by the MFC and the BMA - that the MFC would maintain the value and the BMA would manage the place[55]. It was proposed that the authorities should not exclude the heritage from its setting, and the people in that setting should be valued and tasked with maintaining their heritage. However, the physical qualities of the ancient wooden houses are not the only values of the MFC's heritage. The new conservation concept of heritage and its setting suggests that it takes the history, way of life, and culture of the people[56], or the 'people value'[57], into consideration.

Landlord vs. community

Most of the land in Krung Rattanakosin, and often including the properties on it, belong to the institutional landlords. The origin of the cities in Thai society and its conditions of land ownership trace back to the era when the whole country was under absolute rule by the king. During the 'Rattanakosin Period' (1782- present days), early Bangkok as defined by its city wall and moat was originally owned by the king of 'Siam' - as Thailand was formerly known until 1939. Since the transition to constitutional monarchy in 1932, the ownership of the city area was gradually transferred to the governmental authorities, but many plots still belonged to the king and descendents (i.e. given by the king to princes and princesses), and monasteries (i.e. given by the king, and the elites, to make great merits)[58]. These key landlords often subdivided the land for rental, sometimes with properties such as rental shophouses built for civil servants and common people. One of the most influential landlords with an important role in the urban conservation and dissonant heritage of Bangkok Old Town is the Crown Property Bureau (CPB), as will be shown in the case of the Luen Rit Community (LRC) in the Chinatown (see Figure 1).

The properties of the king were transferred to the CPB after the political reform in 1932. The CPB has rented out the shophouses, among other lands and properties, to private individuals, and in the case of the LRC the residents have used the properties to operate textile businesses for generations. After a study in 2002 to make a district plan for Bangkok Chinatown, the refurbishment of the buildings and the installation of new pavements in the LRC were implemented by the BMA. However, at almost the same time, the CPB as the landlord already had a plan to redevelop the area, by replacing the 229 shophouses with a gigantic shopping complex in order to generate more profit during the economic recession. Tenants were asked to move out with compensation but no one wanted to do so[59].

According to Pimonsathean[60], the LRC asked the Fine Arts Department (FAD), the sole competent authority in heritage preservation in Thailand, to register the shophouses. The FAD thus conducted a rapid survey and stated that the shophouses had cultural value, and that they warranted preservation. Further studies were then carried out by a planning school, involving both physical and socio-economic assessments as well as opinion surveys on how the residents might participate in the building rehabilitation campaign. The results of the second opinion survey revealed that most of the tenants were willing to restore the buildings, even using their own money, if they were granted long lease contracts from the CPB. After a public session with the participation of representatives from FAD, CPB, architectural and planning schools, and local politicians, the CPB decided not to continue the redevelopment project.

The long leasing, however, might have become an unfinished deal between the LRC and the CPB, since many other communities (and individual tenants) with a similar situation to the LRC have also been looking for chances to negotiate the same deal with the CPB. This kind of institutional (re)gentrification happened not only because the CPB is seeking opportunities to take back its properties to redevelop, after leaving them in decay for decades, but also because many tenants have been secretly making profits behind the landlord's back. The CPB has usually rented out their properties at a low rate and, for decades, hardly increased the rents of residential properties like shophouses, despite knowing that the market price and value of any properties in the inner city area/urban historic quarters had sharply increased. However, this has much to do with the first wave of gentrification, which has made the CPB re-evaluate the hidden value of their dilapidated historic properties, as well as reconsider some tenants that dishonestly sublet the units to the gentrifiers.

Conflicts within the community

Certain tenants of shophouses that belong to institutions like the CPB often secretly sublet the properties in urban historic quarters to the gentrifiers. In some cases, for example a shophouse near a historic monument and core tourist area, the tenant can sublet the property at a rate nearly a hundred times higher than the rent paid to the CPB, not including the 'lease payment' that the sub-tenants were also asked to pay separately[61]. Higher rent generally increases higher expenditure on daily life of the occupants and also higher expected profit that the commercial gentrifiers have to seek their fortune in the historic properties.

The initial wave of gentrification in the early 1990s, in the tourist district called 'Banglamphu' in the Inner Rattanakosin (see Figure 1), brought some benefits to the historic community-and the first signs of trouble. The 'pioneers'[62] in the first wave of gentrification were well-educated young adults who especially enjoyed the location near old universities and the nostalgic/artistic atmosphere of the historic area, such as the shophouses on Phra Arthit Road. They opened evening pubs and restaurants with 'art spaces', as well as 'hangouts' with art and scholastic events for students and participants in the art scene, which eventually attracted the middle class and tourists. Rarely, however, did these enterprises support the broader economic, social and environmental diversity of the area: one exception was a book shop, the only case of mixed residential and commercial gentrification from this period[63] (see Figure 2). Unfortunately, such a business could not survive the competitive rate of the rents, driven up by the neighbourhood's booming leisure and entertainment businesses.

Figure 2: A 'short-lived' bookshop on Phra Athit Road, near Khao San, could not cope with
the uncontrolled rent rate and moved out of the booming neighbourhood.

According to Pokharatsiri[64], almost none of the residents use the services of this sort of commercial gentrification. The residents had different opinions on it, but at the early stages they considered gentrification as a sign of progress for the community, such as improving the physical environment and feeling safer in the evening hours, although it did not help fix any problems in the community, such as drugs and crime problems among the youth. Some pioneers even served as activists for the area with various artistic and cultural campaigns, and thus were accepted by the community as respectful residents although they did not actually 'live' there (i.e. were residing outside the community). Later on, as these businesses grew, they were labeled as 'indecent' places with troublesome youths and lines of pubs and restaurants (some doubling as 'nightclubs'), which had caused many problems to the residents including traffic congestion and conflicts over parking spaces, as well as nighttime noises - inside and outside the buildings. Everyday affordable services became less accessible, with even bus stops crowded with outdoor tables and pub seating. Gradually, local shops closed down and were rented out to the 'tourism gentrifiers'.

This second wave of gentrification in the 2000s was completely commercial and solely driven by tourism. In Banglamphu, not only have shophouses been gentrified but there are now also many hotels, disguised under the name of 'guesthouses', as well as all kinds of tourist facilities and services that have replaced local residents and shops. This represents both an important agent of and response to changes in the Banglamphu area and Bangkok in general[65]. Many of them ignored the adaptive-use potential and physical value of the historic properties, which are usually considered as a bonus for both gentrifiers and conservationists, but razed the old buildings to the ground and constructed new ones. Hence it pushed more locals out of the neighborhoods, as troubles in everyday life (including lack of privacy and fear of strangers) increased and investors aggressively drove up the sale and rental price of properties.

The impacts of gentrification in the Banglamphu area, aggravated by tourism, have created serious socio-economic diversity, social cohesion, and identity threats to its socio-cultural value as a living heritage place[66]. Perhaps the most serious socio-cultural impact from the second wave of gentrification in Banglamphu was the case of an old private school demolished and converted into a hotel exclusively for foreign tourists. Some residents overheard about this rumor and worried that the only school for young children in the community would be purchased and turned into a hotel[67], though it was hard to believe - even when it turned out to be true. The owner of the school stated that the major reasons for this were the 'indecent' behavior of foreign tourists in the neighborhood, thus surrounding the school with an inappropriate environment for schoolchildren[68]. The authorities did not have any comments on the matter. Tensions and conflicts arise eventually, not only between residents and tourism investors, or locals and gentrifiers, but also among the competing stereotypical businesses. They are also struggling to survive the expensive rents and vulnerability of the service-sector economy, which solely depends on the international tourism - a market that has virtually monopolised the area, despite being completely separate to the lives of most residents.

Conclusion

The locals inherit the 'people value' and thus maintain the value of a living heritage place. Conflicts and contradictions in heritage management involving tourism and gentrification are not concerned with the conservation of its physical qualities but rather with the social dimensions. Studies by architectural and planning schools are helpful to get some answers that can inform key decision makers, but only if they are undertaken before the decision has already been made. However, it seems to be a prolonged dispute, involving all the players. Legal conflicts over the rights, land, and heritage of the area, based on decisions made long ago by the elites, have become a longstanding open wound to the communities and the authorities, as shown in the case of the MFC and the BMA. Strong communities can survive gentrification by institutional landlords, as shown in the case of the LRC and the CPB, only if they have discovered their social value and maintain it. Physical qualities are the basic value of heritage places that should be assessed, but even if the communities have little or no apparent 'aesthetic' value, like in the case of the MFC, the strong social value of the communities should still be accepted by the authorities. The only question is how to prove, that social value exists in a living heritage place. Impacts found in gentrification and tourism intervention of the Banglamphu area suggested that the intangible social value of the place can also be identified through the process of identifying threats to existing values. Thus, dissonant heritage in Bangkok Old Town is not to be avoided but to be understood, right from the beginning, and to be accepted as a valuable inheritance of the people of the place who maintain it.

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Bangkok Old Town in Dissonance : Heritage, Tourism and Gentrification

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Abstract

Dissonance is by nature a significant feature of heritage, habitually recognised in the conservation and management of the historic environment. This paper questions the benefits, in terms of the socio-cultural values of urban conservation, from the intervention of tourism and gentrification in the historic quarters of Bangkok, Thailand - a living heritage place that has been struggling to cope with its own 'people value'. The socio-political and legal conflicts over the so-called heritage properties of 'Bangkok Old Town' were explored through the three case study communities : Mahakan Fortress, Luen Rit and Banglamphu. These cases respectively represented the heritage dissonance of a community with the authority, with the landlord, and within the community itself. Tourism and gentrification, together a major driving force of contradiction in this context, were not marked out to take the blame but rather to emphasise the misunderstanding of heritage value that can accompany top-down policies and insensitive management. For the sake of safeguarding the cultural significance of a heritage place, the relevant policies and plans should aim to tackle the social value aspects, as constituted in the people of the place, to achieve appropriate and sustainable governance in urban conservation and heritage management.