

# ICRP 2019

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### **BUILDING SOCIAL RESILIENCE WITH YOUTH THROUGH URBAN PROJECTS: CITY OF NAN, THAILAND**

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#### *Abstract*

This paper presents a research outcome of building social resilience with youth through new urban projects of Nan historic city, North of Thailand. The research of the first year has been proceeded through deliberative public engagement with two groups of youth, local youth and architecture students. The objective of the research are, to search for potential places in the city proposed by youth as urban regeneration and conservation projects and to propose the selected project to the city of Nan with support from Chulalongkorn University (CU), under the framework of CU Community Engagement to stimulate mutual activities between university and local people for sustainable development. As one of the most popular tourist destinations, Nan is encountering rapid urban development, cultural and social changes. This research is finding solutions for the city collaborated with local youth as essential stakeholder as they are being actually touched by these rapid changes and they will unavoidably encounter these impacts in the future without any proper intervention. Deliberative public engagement has been applied as main methodology for local youth to exchange ideas, perceptions and uses of their city with architecture students in workshops, local youth as user of the city and architecture students as workshop organiser and project visualiser. Regarding three-year planned research project, the selected site agreed with the city of Nan will be developed and implemented as pilot project with collaboration of youth, broader stakeholders and architecture students for next coming years for better and more resilient society.

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**Keywords:** Local youth, urban regeneration and conservation project, social resilience, City of Nan, deliberative public engagement.



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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a process of building social resilience with youth for urban projects of Nan historic city from a research proceeded by bottom-up participatory (deliberative public engagement).



**Figure 01.** Nan province (green) is located in the North of Thailand, approximately 700 kilometers from Bangkok (yellow)

Source : [www.nan.go.th/webjo/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=22](http://www.nan.go.th/webjo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=22)

Nan city is the capital of Nan province which is a border province located in the north region between Thailand and Laos (see Figure 1). As one of the popular tourist destinations, Nan is encountering rapid physical, economic and social changes from tourism and urban development. Through the history of more than 600 years, Nan was once a royal city with rich tradition and cultural heritages (Committee ..., 2001). Tangible heritage as palaces, religious buildings, monuments and traditional architectures are omnipresent along with intangible heritage presented in arts, crafts and foods in daily life of people. Impacts from tourism has progressively generated changes to these cultural heritages, city and people. This paper presented the outcome of the first year of three-year plan research project finding the solutions from these impacts for city and people and building a resilient society. Chulalongkorn University (CU) supported the research through a project called “CU community engagement” which has an objective to encourage all the faculties and parties in the university creating network and relation with local communities around the campus (where a regional campus is located in the city of Nan, North of Thailand) and to co-create the long-term research and learning process with these local communities (Office of Strategy Management..., 2018).

## 2. Problem Statement

This research relates to three key issues. Firstly, many heritages of Nan particularly tangible heritages have been exploited and used intensively for tourism as tourist attractions, monuments and places for tourist activities and selling local goods and products. These places are located at the city's centre and tourist prime area. This research therefore focuses on finding places for local people in the city particularly local youth, age of 15-24 defined by United Nations (UNESCAP, 2017) as main stakeholder. Local youth have been included in the process concerning their perceptions of cultural heritages and tourism, their uses of urban spaces, tourist attractions and daily life. Secondly, urban regeneration and conservation projects have usually been implemented from Top-down process and without proper participatory process with the stakeholders. This paper then presents a bottom-up process collaborated between two groups of youth, local youth and architecture students. Potential urban projects have been proposed to the City of Nan as the outcome of the research. Lastly, traditional learning process for architecture and urban design as studio-based class still has gap between students and local people as lack of discussion and contextual comprehension with local people. Workshops therefore have been organised by architecture students as a platform to exchange their ideas about the cultural heritages and urban projects which more responsive to their needs, activities and places in daily life with local youth. This research tried to deal with these three issues with the objectives to search for mutual understandings of heritages with the local youth in order to develop and conserve these heritages together through implementation of urban projects. Local youth have been included since beginning of the process because they are main users of the city and they will also be future main stakeholders to continue and to pursue these projects in order to encounter the changes from tourism and city development. All these three issues of this research aim for creation of social resilience for people and for the city of Nan which corresponded to its definition of a capacities to tolerate, absorb, cope with and adjust to environmental and social threats (Obirst, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010).

## 3. Research Questions

Research questions of this research related to perception of cultural heritages and uses of urban spaces by local youth.

- Firstly, what are heritages of Nan perceived by local youth?
- Secondly, how local youth related to these heritages and how they perceived the impact from tourism?
- Thirdly, how these local youth use spaces of the city. Lastly, where are the places that related to cultural and daily activities for local people?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is the finding of new urban projects with local youth through the research of urban regeneration and conservation projects. The first year's research has been proceeded through bottom-up participatory with two groups of youth, local youth and architecture students.

## 5. Research Methods

The methodology of this research is presented through seven steps of the first-year research integrated with an urban regeneration design studio. The research applied the bottom-up participatory process as main methodology during 10 months (August 2018-June 2019). Two groups of youth, local youth of Nan (primary and secondary students in the city of Nan) and 3<sup>rd</sup> year architecture students are main actors in the research. Including local youth from the beginning of the project is the main methodology of this research as creation the sense of belonging, people is an integrated part of environment or system from their involvement (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). Local youth are not only main users of the city, but they will also be main stakeholder of the city and the project in the future.

### 5.1. Project introduction

The project has been introduced to targeted groups as educational institutes both basic educational schools and vocational colleges located in the administrative area of the city of Nan in August 2018. The objective is to introduce the research to the targeted schools located in the city of Nan. The methodology used in this step is to recruit the youth with the diversity of classes and their interests to participate in the participatory workshop organised in January 2019. This introduction has been also presented to the government agency as to the director of Provincial education office and to the mayor of Nan city.

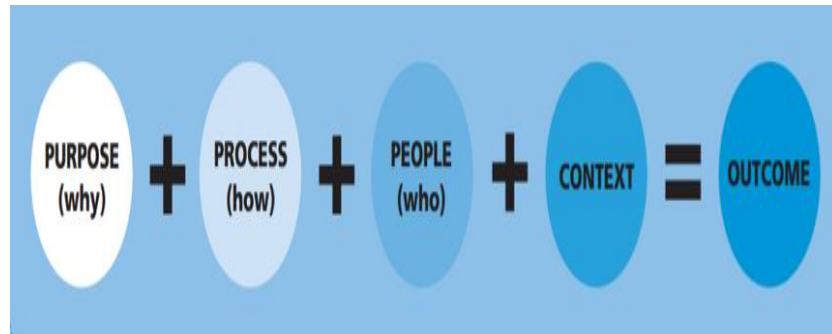
### 5.2. Workshop preparation



**Figure 02.** Preparation for workshop by urban design students of the faculty of Architecture.

This step has been integrated with the 3<sup>rd</sup> year architectural studio-based class, urban regeneration projects for a semester. Methodology for this step is the literature reviews, secondary data analysis and questioning about city, people and culture which will be used for the workshops and for their design projects. City mapping, pictures and sketches have been used as a tool for analysis of tourist attractions, existing cultural heritages of Nan and impacts from tourism and city development. The workshop preparation had been organised by students, preparing questions and topics, game design and activities as tools for discussion with local youth (see Figure 2). This step took 2 weeks in January 2019 after the beginning of Thai second semester.

### 5.3. Workshop 1: Finding local identities and cultural heritages in daily life



**Figure 03.** Composition of deliberative public engagement applied in this research

Source: National Consumer Council (2008)

The workshop has been organised by the architecture students a month after the start of semester in the campus of Chulalongkorn University in Nan. This workshop applied framework of “deliberative public engagement” process which is an approach of involving people to discuss through the process of decision-making. This approach is different from traditional approach as top-down measure (National Consumer Council, 2008) which composed of purpose, process, people and context for discussion.

The workshop specifically applied a deliberative workshop which provide the participants opportunities to consider the opinion and develop the issues together (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2017). By applying this methodology, the objective of the workshop is to encourage reaction and participation from local youth, this process is organised differently by dividing into small focus groups to facilitate informal discussion and to easily share information between youth.

The purpose has been set not only to collect concerned information from local youth during the workshop but also to make them realised values of their cultural heritages coexisting in their way of everyday life (see Figure 3). The workshop has been proceeded by two groups of youth, local youth and students from faculty of architecture, total of 115 students. The third-year urban design students and fourth year community-based product design students, total 30 students have mixed into groups to equalise the focus groups. Local youth from schools were mixed into ten tables with the objective of diversity of youth in each table. Tools of the workshop have been designed into games and activities, by challenging quick answers by using the post-it notes and mapping of the city (drawing) to create mutual uses of city from the participants in the group.



**Figure 04.** Workshop divided in focus groups to facilitate exchange of ideas and discussion

The students from the faculty of Architecture have set their specific roles during the workshop (see Figure 4). There are 4 groups, first group is MC (master of ceremony) who informed all the participants (local youth) about program and schedule of workshop and also organised the central stage where the main questions and topics for the participants have been announced. Second group is facilitators who took responsibility of focus group tables (10-12 youth per table). The facilitators started group discussion and stimulated the participants to brainstorm about the topics and questions raised from central stage. The facilitator invited all the participants to draw the mapping diagram of the city from their experiences and uses in the daily life, places and roads and also the images of the city (Figure 5). Helper is the third group with a role of collecting answers (post-it note with different colours) of each topic from youth then categorised into groups of answers, took the pictures of the summary. Notetaker summarised the result of each topic and prepared a presentation by a representative of each group.



Figure 05. Mapping diagram of places and roads by local youth

#### 5.4. Analysis of information from workshop



Figure 06. Analysis of area usage during the week by youth, from the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop

In studio class, students reconsidered their analysis by using the quantitative and qualitative information gathered from the workshop. Quantitative information such as intensity of uses of the city's spaces during weekday and weekend, routes and streets used in daily life and number of cultural places knew by participants. On the other hand, qualitative information such as experiences, perception of spaces and cultural heritages, values of heritages have been analysed to construct urban design project proposals for architecture students. In short, local youth generally know their cultural heritage both tangible and intangible heritages related to places of the city. The methodology used at this step therefore is city mapping, cultural heritage mapping, maps and sketches presenting through graphic communications (Figure 6). At this step, the students have proposed their ideas and selected the strategic area for their urban regeneration and conservation projects with relevant proposed activities for the projects.

### **5.5. Design proposals**

At this step, students worked on their design for the strategic projects in the different ways and different aspects concerning their fields of interest. The methodology of this step is the visualisation process through graphic communication media and three-dimensional models. All the tools and programs have been created at this step-in order to visualise the project as the proposals are designed for non-professional students to easily understand the projects, therefore the architecture students decided to prepare their projects with before-after comparison photos of sites. The retouching of the existing photos by Adobe Photoshop made local youth reminded of the places. Furthermore, the three-dimensional model programs have been done then superposed to the photos. They also prepared their presentations and organisation of the second workshop by designing a common communication with local youth. Games and challenges had been designed for the workshop, local youth will be challenged for discussion and for prioritising the projects.

### **5.6. Workshop 2: Project discussion and selection of potential areas**

The second workshop has been organised two months later in the city of Nan. This workshop was organised differently from the first workshop, the results from last workshop are the summary of understanding and uses of urban area concerning tourism, perception of cultural heritage and conservation and also uses of the urban spaces by local youth (see Figure 7). The objective of this workshop was to have common agreement between local youth which were the same group of participants from the first workshop. The summary of the first workshop was summarised to the participants through graphic communication and also the design proposals were also presented in this workshop. Activities of this workshop have been emphasised on the project design for city and for people of Nan





**Figure 07.** Presentation of proposals by students for discussion and selection of potential sites

### 5.7. Creation of Network: Presentation of the city

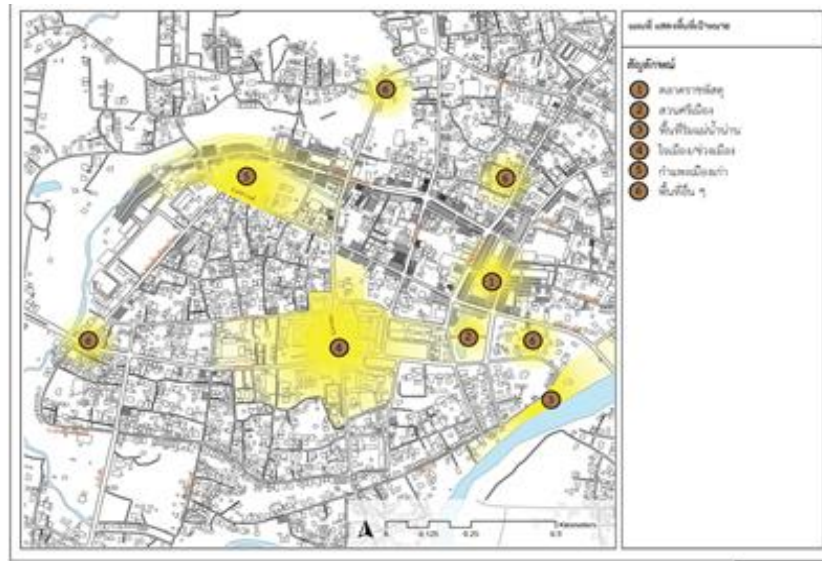


**Figure 08.** Proposals collaborated with local youth presented to the mayor of Nan

All the selected projects and comments from local youth have been presented with the proposals to the mayor of the city of Nan. After the presentation to the mayor, a discussion about the potential sites agreed by the city has been proceeded (see Figure 8). The proposals from the students have been submitted to the city and also some students have been interviewed by the staff of municipality. After this step, creation of network for implementing the projects is the main objective. The proposals will be reconsidered in the next coming year along with the second-year research project, local youth are still the main participants and more stakeholders concerning the strategic area and topics of urban regeneration and conservation will be included in the next year process.



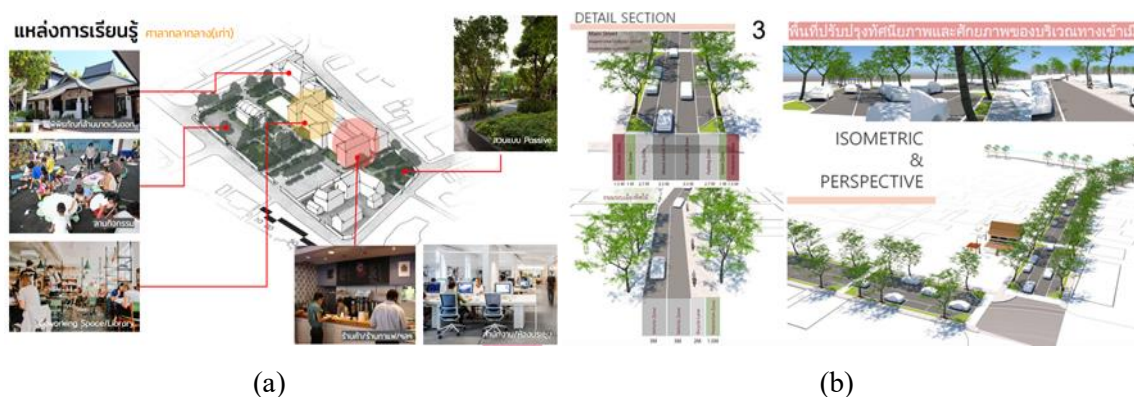
## 6. Findings

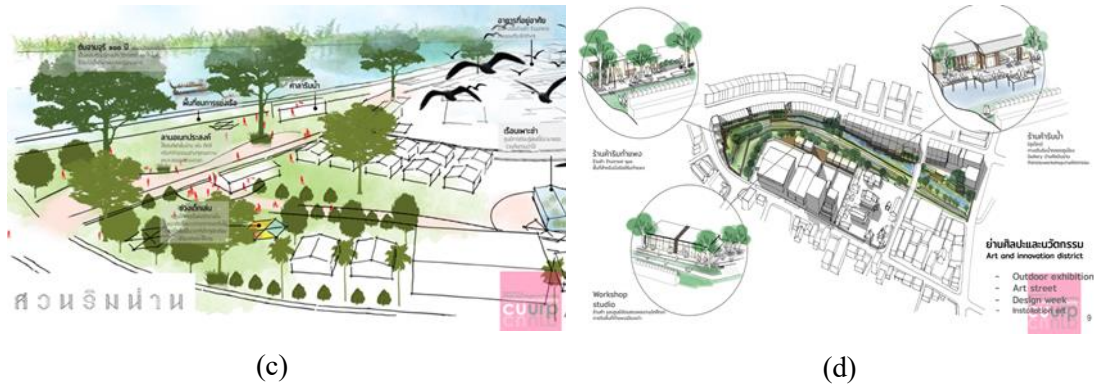


**Figure 09.** Potential area proposed to the city of Nan

Finding, discussion and voting for the potential projects are the activities organised by architecture students, six groups of potential areas such as city's main market (Figure 9, number 1), public central park (Figure 9, number 2), city's waterfront (Figure 9, number 3), city's centre (Figure 9, number 4), old city's wall (Figure 9, number 5) and city's entrance (Figure 9, number 6), 34 projects for urban regeneration and conservation have been presented to local youth. Two groups of youth had the discussion about activities, time and uses of these projects.

All the 34 projects have been discussed for the uses by participants then voted for potential projects to be developed, the top vote is the project of city's entrance by trees and bike lane where important events of the city are organised annually (see Figure 10a) then city's waterfront along with the old big rain tree conservation as spaces for city and historical tourism (see Figure 10c), two projects are in the third rank, in city's centre as a learning space for local & creative craft for people and shops (see Figure 10b) and revitalising old city's wall as the meeting place and evening market for art and craft (see Figure 10d). Two projects for the central park are the fourth rank, park at night and floating exercise area.





(a) Adaptive reuse of old city’s hall for learning and co-working space; (b) City’s entrance project;  
 (c) Waterfront with big tree project; (d) Revitalising project of old city wall for art and craft

**Figure 10.** Potential projects for the City of Nan

The findings of the first-year research led to the selection of potential sites to develop which local youth (as current and future stakeholder of the city) and architecture students (as visualiser) mutually collaborated and co-created. Concerning the questions of the research about the perception of local youth to cultural heritages and uses of urban spaces in daily life, firstly we can understand that local youth understand generally their cultural heritages.

Secondly, in case of many projects, local youth lack of spaces that responded to their need of daily life in the city as result from the vote, the city’s entrance project is one of the reflexion of their thinking about the city as they commute everyday inbound and outbound between their schools and their homes, the improvement of city’s entrance is a place that they generally pass every day (see Figure 10b). Another case of city’s wall, actually this area is a park maintained by the city but mostly abandoned and few people use only in the morning as the park runs parallelly along the wall and back of the buildings. Local youth also acknowledge this situation of the wall then they see the potential of connecting this area with the neighbourhood by opening more connection and building’s entrance to the wall with some activities related to evening market and creative area of art& craft (see Figure 10d).

Thirdly, targeted areas voted by local youth matched with the targeted area of the city but different point of views, as the central plaza of the city is one of the most popular area of the city with a presence of many monuments and temples. Being one of the most visited area, this area is also one of the most congested area because of the road main junctions. The city organised the weekend market at this plaza by allowing cars to drop visitors at the main junction. The proposal from youth is to created better pedestrian-friendly zone and to manage vehicles away from this area to release congestion of cars. This project aims to reconnect all the places in the walking distance.

## 7. Conclusion

The outcome from the first-year research with youth, we can have the conclusion that local youth generally understand their heritages. The deliberative public engagement process in this research (National Consumer Council, 2008) created a platform for discussion and collaboration between two groups of youth

(local youth and architecture students) of inversed process from conventional top-down process for urban regeneration and conservation projects. Some projects clearly matched to on-going projects of the city as the strategic locations but with different approaches and point of views.

The outcome of the research can have mutual benefits for both groups of youth. For local youth, they realise and perceive the influence of the tourism and changes to their city. For architecture students, learning with local people and organising workshops which applied deliberative public engagement process are important for the study.

Building more resilience society, the projects should also serve relevant activities of the local people as well as tourist activities. For the city of Nan, the proposals from this research are the beginning of the collaboration with local people for urban regeneration and conservation projects.

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