DECODING THE COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PLAN, BASED ON THAI-MON ROOTS OF KLONG PHRA-UDOM COMMUNITY, NONTHABURI PROVINCE

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Abstract:

At present, a major challenge facing Klong Phra-Udom community is that the values and the identity of the community are adversely affected by the urbanization process. As the urban sprawl of Bangkok Metropolitan has been spreading to the suburban areas, this phenomenon has terribly destroyed its original identity. In addition, it is found that concerned parties or agencies do not pay enough attention to this community and the community itself is not aware of its identity collapse. The community development has gradually abandoned its value and identity in order to transform the community into a new city without true identity. This phenomenon is similar to that happening to most major cities worldwide.

This article has conducted qualitative research, acquiring spatial data as well as conducting in-depth interviews with the target groups of senior citizens and local wise men there. Moreover, hand-made map making approach has been used as a technique to create "Cultural Landscape Plan".

With respect to research findings, it is found that the demographic background of Klong Phra-Udom community indicates the local citizens with Thai-Mon roots whose ancestors immigrated from the war in Mon State or Bago Region in Burma. These immigrants, who have settled down in Thailand for 200 years, possess the profound knowledge or highly civilized wisdom. Decoding the community identity has revealed the values and its identity worth preserving, restoring or organizing development plans based on the value and its identity to turn such plans into long-term ones.

The research focuses on initiating knowledge base to the public as a framework and an outline for urban sprawl which does not ignore its root. The researcher expects changes leading to Sustainable Tourism and Eco-cultural City Planning in the long run.

Keywords: Mon Ethnic Group, Waterfront Community, Cultural Landscape Plan, Eco-cultural Tourism, Sustainable Development.

Introduction:

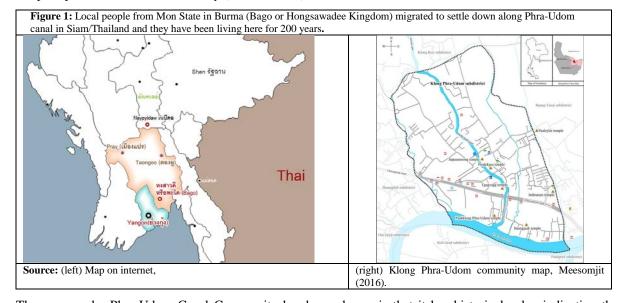
Over the past 40-50 years, since Thailand has imposed the National Economic and Social Development Plan number 1 (1961-1966) to number 8, the plans have caused booming trends like those in the West especially the infrastructure and, material progress's growth and dissemination. Consequently, most local communities have adapted to the globalization by searching for external happiness. This depends on household income to determine happiness or well-being. To earn high household income, local residents decide to abandon their rural residences and immigrate to urban areas. Abandoning local farming and fishing careers and turning to new careers in urban areas cause these immigrants to ignore the environment of their local communities affecting the way of life and the careers which rely on nature. The immigrants forget and are bored with their original culture which is the root and the identity of their groups.

To sum up, in the past, cultural landscape underwent changes and developments gradually. Nowadays, most residents are living in the community environment which has changed rapidly because of the wide spread of social progress and technology. As a result, current cultural landscape has changed more tremendously than it should be (Office of the National Culture Commission). Restoring cultural landscape has made residents more aware and motivated the society to participate in reviving the environment and simple way of life based on the hypothesis stating that way of life and community development follow the guidelines of sufficiency and sustainability. These guidelines will be in accordance with the condition of the limited natural resources and the world's energy. These guidelines are also in line with His Majesty the King's philosophy of economic sufficiency and can be used to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the truly sustainable and substantial development.

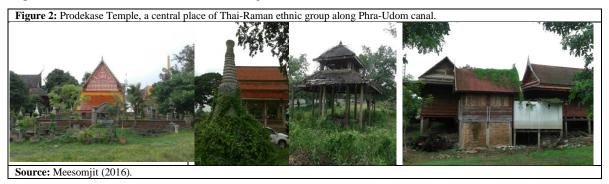
Klong Phra-Udom community is considered as one of the suburban areas affected by the urban sprawl of Bangkok Metropolitan. The community has potential to be used a case study to plan, develop, preserve, restore and inherit creatively to achieve the ideal cultural community which will last long for daily life activities,

patterns, structures or aspects of tangible cultural heritage. The mission will turn this community into a desirable destination for cultural tourism.

Economic growth and urbanization have introduced new business into the areas of old cities. Modern way of life tends to destroy tradition, culture and archeological sites. Although the cultural heritage sites of these cities have attracted tourists and generate a great deal of revenue from tourism and other related businesses. This source of revenue has become a major economic part of many cities (Charoenmuang, 2001). The phenomena have caused an immediate and long-term impact on original buildings or structures which are very valuable in terms of culture and local architecture. Such buildings or structures are the existing evidence of memorable history signifying the prosperous era in the past. Unfortunately, they will be replaced by more modern buildings. This replacement has an effect on local residents in terms of the loss of privacy sense, the decline of unique local community identity (such as landscape, natural & local scenery, architecture, way of life, tradition, belief and so on). In other words, it means the loss of mutual community spirit, changes in their way of life and the use of open space in the urban community (Orbasli, 2000).



The reason why Phra-Udom Canal Community has been chosen is that it has historical value indicating the development of the town and the community which still maintains its local uniqueness and timeless beauty. The areas along the canal consists of cultural resources (Prodekase Temple, Sapaansung Temple, Thongkung Temple, and Pakklongphra-udom Temple) and 200-300 Thai-Mon residences. These areas have reflected cultural traces or traditional heritage, value and belief in Thai-Mon way for 200 years until now. For instance, this can be seen from the early settlement here and then settlers moved to "Koh Kred Island" to make it prosperous. The examples of settlement evidence are furnaces for earthenware, Laplae folktales and so on. Moreover, natural resources signify the past abundance of crops, a great deal of water, a rich way of life and traces of healthy food stability (agriculture and local fishing). Local senior citizens are the leaders who try to restore history and the monk who works as preservationists taking care of ancient sites and Thai-Mon cultural landscape (Prodekase Temple) to preserve the original uniqueness. Government agencies also take responsibilities and missions on preserving antiquities and need to develop Eco-cultural tourism. (Fine Arts Department and Subdistrict Administrative Organization of Phra-Udom canal)



Research Objectives:

The article has significant objectives which are (1) to trace back the historical background of Phra-Udom Canal Community, Nonthaburi province in Thailand, (2) to draw the community map to reveal "the cultural landscape" as an important physical identity and (3) to gather knowledge base to restore its values to serve as a model of the cultural community in the age of globalization. This research article has conducted qualitative research applying research tools such as studying primary data to calibrate secondary data, acquiring spatial data as well as conducting in-depth interviews with the target groups of senior citizens and local wise men there. Moreover, hand-made map making approach has been used as a technique to create "cultural landscape plan" through the process of city plan in order to make the community more aware and to demonstrate mutual learning process between interested groups and stakeholders involved.

This research study requires the knowledge on local history and principles to initiate long-term development plans through decoding the community plan and managing community's cultural landscape. Such initiatives are implemented to make the community and related multi-partite aware of the cultural value to create systematic community development and preserve a suitable living environment, valuable way of life and good quality of life. The ultimate goal is expected results of well-being and sustainability in the long run.

Research Questions:

- 1. How have the history and the background of Phra-Udom canal community developed?
- 2. How have the changes or the transformation of the community caused by urbanization happened when they are verified by relevant theory?
- 3. What are the suggestions, principles and concepts to plan, develop, restore and preserve the community with cultural heritage to survive and last long in the globalization age?

Methods and Process:

This study is qualitative and documentary research by reviewing related literature, gathering the information on local history and explaining it in an empirical study. On-site research was also conducted by expert's evaluation tool called Delphi technique using indepth-interview with 8 urban academicians and cultural anthropologists. Moreover, snowball technique were applied by interviewing 7 senior citizens and local wise men. The observation has been conducted for 8 months and the data were analyzed through aerial photographs and GIS database.

The theories in use are those on Socio-cultural Theories which start from connections between villages and states, and anthropologists studied folk ways in the "little tradition", taking into account broader civilization (Robert Redfield: 1857-1958), those on The Evolution of Culture: The Development of Civilization through Structural Culture Theories (Leslie White: 1900-1975), and those on Cultural Ecology Theories: Multilinear Evolution (Julian Steward: 1902-1972). Urban Morphological Theories (M.R.G. Conzen, 1907) Cultural Geographical Theories: cultural landscapes are made up of "the forms superimposed on the physical landscape (Carl Sauer, 1927), Cultural Geography, Evolutionary Theories of Social Change, Developmental Theories, Social Conflict Theories, Structural-Functionalist Theories (Peet, 1998). Global Capitalism: Theories of Societal Development (Routledge: 1991), Moreover, other theories in use include those on Sustainable Development (Earth Summit, 1992),

Results and Discussion:

It is very necessary that city planners should address the theories which deal with urban or architectural phenomena and then they can apply other theories to explain the phenomena of architecture and city. (Hiller, 1987) From the initial development of Klong Phra-Udom Community, it is found that the settlement was densely populated along the canal. Its architecture was related to geographical location. In other words, the community was located by the canal and full of water in rainy season. Local residents made a living by doing local agriculture such as garden raised beds, paddy field, handicrafts. The local residents used boats as their major water transportation route. Temples and markets were the centers of this community and neighborhood.

Historical background, evidence of community heritage through landscape, land use, and existing architecture have enabled the researcher to discover how to manage cultural landscape by learning from observing the community environment, studying history, belief, culture and tradition including the lifestyle of senior residents there. The researcher also examined the knowledge from local culture scholars, gathered information including the environment and cultural heritage, processed all important information, added it to the map and turned the key feature into "cultural landscape plan". As a result, this led to the organization process of "participatory community development plan" for next step. This pattern and the process created knowledge, information exchange, the evaluation of area value and resources including cultural and natural heritage. For instance, the meaning of history, society-spirit, economy and ecosystem all created a unique pattern and suitable methods for

planning, managing, preserving, restoring, inheriting and developing with the least negative side effects or conflicts. However, this should induce the most holistic benefits as possible.

The settlement of Klong Phra-Udom Community started from the early settlement along the canal banks, the low plain, According to the finding by other research work (Mizno, 1978: 90). Such settlement was based on key factors such as agricultural careers, handicrafts from local materials (growing crops, rice, feeding animals, making earthenware, etc). Consequently, local residents established a river linear village as their own village full of facilities and infrastructure such as temples, markets bazar, transportation route. Each temple was the village center whose influence was to unite the village members to live in peace together.

According to the research findings on the overall picture of landscape and community physical conditions, it is found that geographical factors played a major role in the early settlement which could satisfy basic necessities: (1) food demand (2) safety (3) grouping related to cultural relationship (4) ecosystem environment which could meet these 3 basic necessities. Historical community development (abstract background) and the settlement patterns (physical evidence as concrete background) were summarized into phases below.

Table 1: Settlement Development of Thai-Mon ethnic group in Klong Phra-Udom community			
Community Development	Aspects/Patterns/Phenomena		
Phase 1: The early settlement Clearing the jungle for settle down	(A.D.1539-1824) After local residents settled down, they started to make a living through agriculture. Their residences were located in groups in line with cultural relationship and along the canal for their major transportation route. (Status: Baanlaem Canal)		
Phase 2: Prosperity Age Obviously, local residents were living closely together in groups and creating a unique identity.	(A.D.1850-1960) Local residents focused on agriculture and sold their handicrafts which showed their specific but unique cultural identity. They extended their canal to provide water transportation route connected to the plural society outside. (Status: Phra-Udom canal)		
Phase 3: Deteriorate Age Accept western culture for modern lifestyle, move the center boom from neighborhood's temple to new center boom.	(A.D.1960-present) Now The road network has been expanding but the water transportation route is in decline. This is the decline phase when local residents abandon their identity and separate themselves from others. Community identity is vanishing because western civilization is taking over and the community has become more modern in the globalization age.		
Phase 4: Restored Age Local residents will long for their true identity and cooperate to restore it. Source: Meesomiit (2016).	(A.D.2017-onward)		

During the later development, it is found that structural development and community aspects do not correspond to its river linear village gradually. Therefore, such development and aspects have a negative impact on its original identity causing it to decline and vanish. For instance, Thai traditional houses, Thai house applications, Thai-Raman houses whose architect was "stilt houses", open space under the floorboards including its original cultural lifestyle are disappearing as well as fewer agricultural farms. Prodekase Temple, which belonged to Thai-Raman ethnic groups, is now almost like a deserted temple. Thai-Raman lifestyle has moved to other areas (Koh Kred and so on). Since local residents have emigrated from their residents along the canal to the areas next to the new road network especially after the expressway was extended to the community border, modern house village has occupied agricultural areas, forested areas and open space of the community.

When community development is compared with 6 major settlement theories, it is revealed that the community development matches 4 patterns based on these theories below.

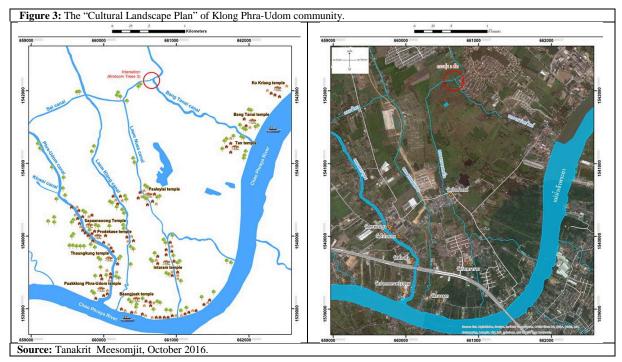
Table 2: Settlement patterns of Klong Phra-Udom community.			
Settlement Form	Aspects/Patterns		
1. The early Settlement The early settlement was in Dispersed Form.	Local residences were clustered within groups of relatives after residents settled down to make a living through agriculture.		
2. Prosperous Community The settlement was in Lineated Form.	The settlement was close and stable. The community was united in Lineated Form along the canal (Klong Phra-Udom). The community created obvious Thai-Raman identity.		
3. Post-Prosperous Community The settlement was steady in Lineated Form.	The community centers were moved further from the temples in the neighborhood to another Trading Junction far away. The distance between the community and the junction was farther because of changes and progress of communication. The interaction happened between plural society particularly transportation technology (motored boats and automobiles)		
4. Community Identity Decline The community settlement was in Planned Form.	The community has transformed into the one with a modern lifestyle. The civilization center has emerged farther from the community because of the influence of big cities. The land use has changed from agricultural areas to plans similar to groups of crescent located next to main roads. The community center is declining considerably until its identity cannot be found.		
Source: Meesomjit (2016).			

Growth, expansion and community physical conditions are influenced by 4 factors which are (1) location (2) site (3) situation (4) function or resident duties together with community duty

Roads and automobiles are regarded as a transportation network which has replaced water transportation network. This new transportation network plays a crucial role in mobility and migration because local residents can travel farther and increase the distance so that they can reach the centers of major cities for their modern lifestyle. Consequently, they decide to abandon their careers, residences and even forget their original identity.

The factors that contribute to success in managing cultural heritage in the community are insider stakeholders or those who live there and whose role is to manage their own cultural heritage. In this case of Klong Phra-Udom community, "the group who has faith in temples" is informal leaders (Thai residents with Mon race). Moreover, the group who has faith in being "Thai residents with Raman race" has roles and influence on participatory process in managing cultural heritage (Hamdi and Goethert, 1997). Meanwhile, the formal leader (the abbot) has such a powerful role in managing cultural heritage because the community and local residents will listen to the monks who are their spiritual leaders. This corresponds to the viewpoints of the experts and local wise men.

The factors that drive the progress of cultural heritage are the informal management of cultural heritage through social mechanism. Those who have major roles are informal groups in the community (senior local residents, housewife groups and youth) based on their relationship of relatives and the cultural connection of the minority groups and formal groups in the community (local administrative organizations, temples and schools). Moreover, the community depends on the roles of formal and informal groups outside the community (such as regional government offices, universities, private business groups, independent scholar groups and so on).



In conclusion, to manage cultural heritage, there is another important factor which is "the environment of cultural sites" together with the factors of the values of cultural heritage on those sites. All these factors are parallel to the slogan "the management of cultural heritage" (Pearson & Sullivan, 1995: 9) Such management is so significant because global economy relies on tourism and this community is planned to develop sustainable tourism (Reed, 1999; Timothy, 1999; Bramwell and Lane, 1999; Hall, 2000; Selin, 1999) as well as the integrated and participatory community tourism. (Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Tosun 2000; Orbasil, 2000; Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1999; Chirstopher Tweed and Margaret Sutherland, 2007) This leads to the concept of managing cultural heritage through community participation. (Venice Charter, 1964; Washington Charter, 1987; International Cultural Tourism Charter, 1999)

According to the 3 types of theoretical landscape and cultural landscape, it is found that Klong Phra-Udom Community has outstanding aspects in both landscape and mixed culture between urban and rural areas such as forested areas, canals, bridges over canals, the houses with high pillars along the canals, agricultural areas, open space, temples and the history of local residents with ethnic group people (Thai-Mon tradition). Besides, Prodekase temple and Klong Phra-Udom are the significant physical landmarks and local folktales on culture, belief are fascinating background to find out.

Concerning the community in physical conditions, it is found that the routes around Klong Phra-Udom subdistrict are interconnected and suitable for travelling on foot or by bike. Introducing bike lane into the community will create tourism and daily commute in slow-life lifestyle in such beautiful and natural landscape by the canal (Phra-Udom Canal). Forested areas are along the way giving cool shade together with sufficient lifestyle of local residents which is so charming.

Klong Phra-Udom subdistrict consists of historical heritage and archeology as its potential assets to drive the economy and satisfy the needs of eco-cultural tourism. The community has to plan and draw the blueprint to improve its ecological environment more systematically. The community needs to initiate preservation and restoration plans for original community lifestyle, sustainable agriculture in urban areas including Thai-Mon way and sufficient agriculture. Therefore, the community can survive and the local residents are helpful to each other in the globalization age so that the community can transform into a cozy, sustainable community in the long term.

Local culture management should be implemented together with community environment management through learning process, participation in planning and decision. To make local residents realize the benefits of cultural landscape, they must gain the direct benefits from environment, lifestyle, culture and original belief. It means that ecological and cultural landscape should be taken as the foundation for the economic, social and environmental development by planning process and the management of tourism development.

The true success factors to restore, inherit and preserve cultural landscape must come from the awareness and motivation of local residents in the community working hand in hand with local administrative organizations, provincial cultural council and other partners involved as supporters.

Patterns which can be used to manage the cultural landscape in Klong Phra-Udom community are

Table 3: illustrates principles and patterns to manage the cultural landscape in Klong Phra-Udom community			
Major Principles	Examples	Patterns and Management Methods	
1. Maintenance	• rivers, canals	Cleaning and improving the landscape by using green infrastructure	
2. Preserving the conditions	Buddha's footprint	no change or renovation for the conditions of important archeological artifacts	
3. Restoration	Restoring pagoda, sermon hall, church	Repairing it to the original condition and making it right according to the archeological principles	
4. Applied benefits	Valuable architecture	Renovating old buildings and turning them into knowledge centers or museums Changing temple areas to community areas based on local identity and peace (market by the canal) under zoning principles	
5. Development and creativity	antiques and antiquities life by the canal Traces of green corridor and greenway along the transportation route	 Collecting and showing antiques as exhibits on display in the local museums Developing floating market or market by the canal Restoring green corridor and greenway 	
6. Reviving and Inheriting	Activities, traditions and lost beliefs	Reviving seasonal traditions in an ancient atmosphere to demonstrate, spread and inherit to young generation	
Source: Meesomjit (2016).			

Figure 4: Proposed "cultural landscape restoration plan" of Klong Phra-Udom community. Open space must be 'sustainable open space' with different types of forest garden landscape as major components. That entire/whole area should allow water to flow is a major component in activities of multifunctional design



The lifestyle connected to the canal has changed to western development leading to the changes in community culture. Local residents turned from water transportation (boat) to inland transportation (automobiles). They changed from agricultural careers to different kinds of careers like those of urban residents. Local residents abandoned their agricultural areas. They lost the connection with their simple lifestyle as well as the culture in which they depended on each other and the touch or integration with local natural resources.

According to the research findings, it is stated that the development patterns of cultural landscape using green infrastructure suitable for Klong Phra-Udom community are

Management Patterns	Key Issues	andscape in Klong Phra-Udom community Methods
Alternative transportation system	Reducing the role of private automobiles Increasing green shades in the community and organizing activities for alternative transportation Restoring water transportation	Changing the landscape from grey road to green road Road (Shading Trees, Bike Route, Trail) Designing community landscape plan Testing and Demonstrating the activities of growing wild crops along the way and promoting leisure activities for tourism (greenway & bike tourism)
2. Green Facility	Using sustainable, renewable energies Managing wastewater Reserving empty space for waterway Keeping the landscape like forested areas Increasing biological diversity Solving the problems of urban heat dome Setting an good example of resilient community	Green building with white rooftop Using renewable energies Using local wisdom wastewater treatment pond Constructing bike sharing kiosk Building meditation pavilion Introducing outdoor library (trees library) providing green parking lot Having green fence, green shelter, forest picnic yard and green wall
3. Developing Green Products	 Managing garbage Initiating food stability Adding local food	Organizing green Sunday market Using green packaging Providing outdoor library (trees library) Promoting healthy food: hydroponic, organic
4. Organizing activities for creative community Source: Meesomiit (2016).	 Increasing awareness of public hygiene Inheriting and restoring local identity 	 Organizing bike rally and bike for reforestation Listening to sermon, praying in Mon language Arranging small boat race Arranging cycling race across the pond Organizing Sunday cultural square Offering food to monks on boat

Conclusion

The phenomenon of changing to new value of modern life causes problems and has a negative result in the decline and disappearance of original culture and the deterioration of cultural community landscape. Therefore, knowledge and strategies to manage cultural community landscape are the key success factors from which local residents can expect the long-term results. These factors can persuade local residents to return to their hometown, restore reconciliation, help each other among community members. The local residents will restore and inherit the identity root through participatory cultural landscape management including cooperation between related parties and stakeholders from various groups. Most importantly, the pilot project should be implemented to create a model of bottom-up neighborhood planning.

Community leaders, the executives of local administrative organization and other related parties should join the project and give their full cooperation to develop such planning based on academic principles and knowledge on specific areas. They should change such planning to participatory cultural landscape management. The community will progress towards well-being and sustainability in every aspect of life in the long run.

Recommendations

The settlement and its existence of Klong Phra-Udom community must be in accordance with the basic principles of the settlement in Ekistics (Doxiasdis, 1968, 1974) which includes individuals and neighborhood. The reason is that individuals will choose to live in a place which signifies their ultimate souls. The next priority is the location which is convenient enough to provide communication with others (Phra-Udom canal). After that, they will consider using the least energy, capital and time. The researcher would like to inform that these factors above are more important before considering much more complicated macro level or global level as Doxiasdis called this hierarchy "Town or City, Metropolis and Ecumenopolis."

The methods of restoring and preserving the identity of Klong Phra-Udom community should be in line with 'urban morphology' (original form of community or 'urban tissue') (Muratori, 1940; Caniggia, 1969) that local residents were born and raised by the canal and in the agricultural areas. The researcher would like to suggest that local residents are encouraged to use public open space for multi-functional uses to meet the needs of different aspects in the area, various groups of local residents (plural society), time differences and different

types of activities. The major factors under consideration are specific characteristics of the community (community structure/cultural and ecological landscape), cultural values (Thai-Raman people) and users or local residents including tourists coming from other areas outside. Besides, the minor factors under consideration are physical conditions, social factors and economic factors. These factors can be integrated and become complete factors acting as basic factors, supporting factors and attracting factors.

There are 4 major schemes for community developments which are (1) restoring the original identity including local architecture by the canal and activities related to the canal (2) inheriting traditions and values of Thai-Mon residents such as religious activities, traditions, beliefs to the youth (3) developing a city plan focusing on restoring ecological environment such as the protection of quality agricultural areas for food stability, the improvement and replacement of retaining wall (grey structure) with 'green dyke' (green structure), reforestation in the community (big trees/shading trees) based on the principle of EbA (Eco-based Adaptation). (4) promoting identity-based economic development or managing eco-cultural tourism. All the 4 schemes can be applied by using "CTS" (Communities, Temples and Schools) as the main drivers. In addition, the local administrative organization (Klong Phra-Udom Subdistrict Administrative Organization) is the network center and the major host to coordinate joint cooperation between the community and other partnership involved.

Figure 5: Maintaining the lifestyle by the canal through preserving the architecture of the houses with high pillars (waterfront community).

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The next phase of the project should be expended to communicate the knowledge on "local history" and "cultural landscape" through the stage of participatory process so that the community and other related parties are more aware, understand the identity or the root and the context related to their original society particularly belief, way of life and community landscape blended in "cultural landscape".

Biography

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