

# Applying the Historic Urban Landscape Approach to the Identification of Urban Heritage Attributes of Bangkok's Old Town

**Wimonrart Issarathumnoon**

Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
wimonrart.i@chula.ac.th

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the study of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach from current international doctrines and analyses along with urban heritage conservation in Bangkok's historic area. The results indicate that the HUL approach helps develop conservation in Thailand from conserving tangible elements as separate objects to conserving and managing tangible and intangible attributes of the entire area by considering holistic values. The approach also helps identify the elements that characterize the area, particularly the character-defining elements of traditional communities, and, furthermore, it offers appropriate means for designing new elements in the area and supports collaborative works among various sectors.

**Keywords:** *Historic urban landscape, urban heritage, Bangkok historic area*

## INTRODUCTION

### Historic Urban Landscape Approach

Since the early 2000s, the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach, which can be considered as a landscape-based approach, has been used as one of the key theories of heritage conservation. The idea originated from the process of improving the historic urban landscape concept, which was initiated by the World Heritage Center. Consequently, a meeting of experts from various countries was organized to create a new recommendation for the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes, the Vienna Memorandum of 2005, which was later adapted to the HUL Recommendation by UNESCO. These events have led to widespread change in the discipline and practices of urban conservation and the documents have been used extensively in many countries.

Subsequently, the HUL approach has been developed from the previously mentioned documents by focusing on conservation methods that are suitable for situations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At present, the term urban historic area is not only referable to the historic center, but rather, the meaning has expanded to cover an area that supports urban regeneration processes initiated by tourism, commercial and cultural activities. Accordingly, the new HUL concept differs from the previous concept, which was an object-based approach implemented by zoning and design regulations, by adopting a holistic, all-inclusive approach in heritage conservation and places emphasis on the relationship of all components and values of the entire area and its setting.

The HUL approach inclusively considers values and attributes of all layers of social/cultural and natural/environmental aspects. On the intangible side, it includes social and cultural practices and values, economic processes and intangible dimensions. On the tangible side, it includes the site's topography, geomorphology, hydrology and natural features, built environment, infrastructures, open spaces and gardens, land use patterns and spatial organization, perceptions and visual relationships, as well as other elements of urban structures (UNESCO, 2011). It is an alternative method that does not divide urban areas based on a zoning system, therefore,

conservation areas are not distinctively separated from other parts of the city. On the contrary, areas are related to one another according to economic and social development, as well as areas with shared natural/or cultural features can be included in a conservation boundary.

The operation of this approach requires complex processes including identification, conservation, and management of heritage. Ultimately, the goal of landscape management is to be an integral part of a sustainable development strategy (Oer, 2007; Veldpaus & Roders, 2013; Jokilehto, 2010; Roders, & Bandarin (Eds.), 2019; UNESCO, 2013).

Since the HUL approach is not rigid, it can be applied to various countries. Each country can apply this concept to develop disciplines and operations depending on its specific contexts. However, similar to several other countries in Southeast Asia, Thailand cannot fully implement Eurocentric urban conservation practices. An important point to be aware of is: which part of the international principle can be applied? Moreover, what is the gap between international practices and the needs of each society?

### Research Objectives, Research Methods and Outcomes

The objective of this study is to find a suitable way of adopting the HUL approach to Bangkok's historic district. Therefore, this paper explores the concepts and guidelines for implementing the HUL principle that has already been studied by researchers, including analysis of data from the research "Urban Heritage Conservation Concepts: from International Principles and Charters to Consideration for Thailand" (Issarathumnoon, 2017).

Research methods are: a) Data Collection: a collection of international principles and charters that focus on urban heritage conservation developed since the 1970s-80s until now and the principles and practices in Thailand; b) Data Analysis and Synthesis: the analyzing and synthesizing of selected international charters on the issues concerning determination of the meaning and scope, identification of urban heritage, and principles of conservation operations; and c) Adoption of the international conservation concepts in Thailand:

discussing the means to apply the landscape approach to fit within Thai contexts.

According to the research that compiled conservation approaches based on various international principles, this article selected only one approach that is most relevant to the conservation contexts in Thailand, which is the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach. The reason for choosing the HUL approach is that the approach is a broad framework, not a charter, therefore, it is adaptable for various applications. In addition, the HUL approach has been currently applied to some old towns and traditional communities in Thailand by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP).

Apart from using the data of the research "Urban Heritage Conservation Concepts: from International Principles and Charters to Consideration for Thailand", this article uses some examples of the cultural mapping from the research "The Urban conservation Plan for Urban Communities and Related Areas along Rattanakosin's Historic canals" to explain some notions on applying the HUL approach to the Urban Thai context (Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, 2014; Issarathumnoon, 2016).

To achieve the objectives, the following content will be divided into 3 parts: the first part is a presentation about the basic information on Bangkok Urban Heritage, the second part is an application of the landscape approach to Bangkok, and the last part is a conclusion.

## **CONSERVATION OF BANGKOK URBAN HERITAGE**

### **Contexts of Bangkok Urban Heritage**

Conservation of the historic area in Thailand remarkably occurred during mid-1970s to early 1980s, as part of the preparation for the Bangkok Bicentennial Celebration in 1982. At that time, preparation of a master plan for the conservation and development of the Rattanakosin Area (the registered conservation area) was carried out. Subsequently, the conservation of old towns and

traditional districts and communities has been expanded both at conceptual and operational levels. The conservation and development guidelines facilitated by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) have played important roles in this process.

Apart from protecting old towns and traditional communities based on the conservation and development guidelines already mentioned, conservation practices of historic areas all over Thailand have also been conducted by local agencies in the form of committees and community organizations, resulting in various operation projects and plans. Although there was neither prototype process nor supportive standards, these operations have progressed to a certain extent (Pimolsathein, 2013, cited in Issarathumnoon, 2018, p.76).

At present, historic areas in Thailand have their meaning and scope defined, including the identification of urban heritage. Furthermore, conservation principles and relevant regulations have been created by several organizations. The three important groups of regulations and laws concerning the conservation of urban heritage in historical areas in Thailand are: 1) the regulations of the Fine Arts Department; 2) the regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister that have become the basis for operations of the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning; and 3) the measures for protecting historic areas in the unitary town plan, a specific town plan according to Town Planning Act, 2019, and other local ordinances and measures. Details of the definitions and scopes of conservation of urban heritage according to these documents are as follows.

**The protection of a "historic district, community, and town" by the Fine Arts Department (FAD).** The "historic district, community, and town" have been designated as one of the 6 types of national monuments. Important characteristics of this type are: "The architectural characteristics are in harmony; the composition of the historic site has continued for a period of time; and the stories are carried on in various forms related to the way of life and the development of the local society." Nowadays, some historic communities have been registered as national monuments, for instance, the row-houses communities of Na Phra

Lan, Tha Chang and Tha Tian, which have been protected as registered monuments under the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, B.E. 2504 (1961), as last amended by the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums (No. 2), B.E. 2535 (1992). Nonetheless, other historic communities have not been registered due to the limitations of the property owner, misunderstandings between building holders, as well as a lack of the measures to create incentives (Pimolsathein, 2013; Subcommittee on Human Rights in Economic, Social and Cultural Affairs, 2015).

**The protection of the “old town and traditional community” by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning.** The “old town” and “traditional community” are protected as historical areas under the conservation and development guidelines. Accordingly, boundaries of old towns were announced by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning from 2005 to 2017.

Historic city areas are protected under the category of the “living old town” (the regulations use the term “living environment”) (The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), 2016). In the regulations, towns are continuously inhabited areas which have developed to become increasingly complex. Since each town has different developments, their images, which reflect social, political, and cultural development, are different. The images and characteristics of the towns are important cultural resources which represent their history and development, and lead to sustainable city management.

An important document prepared by ONEP at the end of 2019 began to apply the term Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), comparable to the word “living old town” (living environment) and presented various frameworks of HUL that should be used in the contexts of old towns in Thailand. For example, regarding components in historic areas, the importance was given to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In addition, it also specified that previously, the highest importance was given to the monuments and sites, or the places that have physical significance. At present,

it is changed to give more meaning to objects and issues which are important to society, culture and economic processes, as well as buildings that support the use of the local community and society. Currently, according to the Regulations of the Prime Minister’s Office on the Conservation and Development of Rattanakosin and Old Towns, 2003, 31 old towns, including Bangkok’s old town—“Rattanakosin Area,” have their boundaries demarcated, with determination on the scope of registration, and the quality standards for cultural environment under the category of “traditional districts and communities” (The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), 2016, 2019).

In addition to defining historic towns as the “old towns,” ONEP also defined historic inhabited areas as “traditional communities.” This refers to built-up areas of settlements, harmoniously formed within its surrounding environments, either in the cities or in rural areas, which have been continuously developed from the past to the present, with distinctive characteristics, both outstanding tangible aspects and social and cultural aspects (The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), 2016).

Considering the conservation of the Rattanakosin area, it can be seen that the new definitions that ONEP has specified according to the HUL guidelines have not yet been applied to the conservation practice. At present, ONEP’s works are mostly conducted by the Rattanakosin Committee in granting permission for the construction of government buildings in Rattanakosin area. The implementation of conservation projects in accordance with the Master Plan for Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin (1928, by ONEP), has been operated by BMA, a local government agency.

**The measures for protecting historic areas in the unitary town plan, specific town plan according to Town Planning Act, 2019, and other local regulations.** In this act, the objectives of town planning are expanded to cover the conservation of urban landscapes, that is, to preserve and renovate places or objects possessing artistic, architectural, historical or archaeological values. Furthermore, the specific

town plan is expanded to serve town conservation and town rehabilitation purposes.

Apart from plans according to Town Planning Act, several local regulations in Bangkok help protect conservation areas by controlling building design, uses and urban density. Furthermore, a current regulatory measure called "Overlay Zoning," which is in a process of preparation, concerns the limitation of urban uses and overall visualization and forms of urban landscape which are designated in the unitary town plan. Overlay Zoning is aimed at controlling the appearance of buildings and urban fabrics, as well as unifying urban historical characteristics (Department of City Planning and the Urban Development, BMA, 2020).

It should be noted that, although rigid restrictions in local regulations and new legal tools help conserve the picturesque and harmonized images of Bangkok urban landscapes, it is possible that such measures may also affect the city's diversity, distinctiveness, and liveliness. Moreover, it seems that the regulations and tools still focus on conserving high valuable buildings and sites, with lower concern on revitalizing less valuable buildings in the overall context.

## Bangkok's Old Town

When using the HUL framework to consider Bangkok's historic area, it can be realized that the formation of the area, the revolution and the process of social change have resulted in the current landscape image. Bangkok's Old Town, "Krung Rattanakosin" has been designated as a historic district of Bangkok since 1982. It covers the areas in the old center of Bangkok City, which has been the center of government administration, the economy, and culture since the establishment of Rattanakosin as the royal capital of Siam in the late seventeenth century. The center of settlement of Rattanakosin consists of three concentric rings of settlement: 1) Inner Rattanakosin; 2) Outer Rattanakosin, located on the east side of the Chao Phraya River; and 3) Krung Thon Buri, located on the west bank of the river. Today, BMA designates the area expanded from three parts of the Rattanakosin areas to the outer city moat, Phadung Krung Kasem, called the "Continuing area of Eastern Rattanakosin." City planning processes

with local involvement and inventory of local historic buildings have been conducted accordingly.

Bangkok's Old Town is a historic area where physical assemblages have been strongly associated with intangible values. It can be seen that the Bangkok inner core is a place of both high culture and popular culture, that is because the area has included the walled area where royal palaces, noble residences, compound housing for servants and staff, and royal temples, are located. At the same time, this area has also been inhabited by local people, who have settled and formed urban communities (*chumchon*). Several long-established urban communities have co-existed with royal places, government buildings, with religious places as the center of beliefs. Other local areas are neighborhoods (*yan*). This term refers to networks of local communities. Additionally, it is the area that has specific characteristics or functions, which are well-known to general people as shopping areas, and craft-making districts.

At present, although there are several factors which have affected the area over time, the Rattanakosin area still retains certain urban characteristics and functions, such as royal temples, historical sites and elements of a fortified city. Some characteristics of traditional communities still remain, such as a dense, complex, mix-used, and close-knitted atmosphere. Nevertheless, some areas have been changed, for instance, several royal palaces and noble houses have been changed into governmental offices or cultural institutes as a result of administrative changes in the 1930s. Moreover, the area has been facing dynamic changes from original functions to serve social, cultural, economic uses, leading to heritage commodification, particularly the areas serving tourism activities.

## APPLICATION OF LANDSCAPE APPROACH TO BANGKOK'S OLD TOWN

According to the efforts of relevant agencies to apply the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) to old towns in Thailand, it is widely seen that this approach has the potential to help develop a conservation vision and widen the range of conservation operations in Thailand to cover all dimensions relating to quality

of life and contemporary living. The landscape approach changes the conservation methodology from merely identifying heritage components and finding means to preserve them, to considering the interrelation among the values of heritage before deciding on efficient and holistic methods in preventing and managing them.

From the possibility of using the HUL approach mentioned above, this study aims to present the key issues to apply the HUL approach to fit within the current definition and scope of conservation practices in Thailand. The issues considered here are: 1) Determining the meaning and scope of historic areas; 2) Identifying urban heritage in the historic area; and 3) Defining key principles for conservation operations.

## Determining the meaning and scope of historic areas

The use of a new definition based on a landscape approach helps to change the way boundaries of the historic areas are perceived. One is to change the perception on “time,” referring to the history of the area, the other is to change the perception on “space,” referring to the scope and meaning of the area.

**Perception on “time”.** A landscape approach allows us to consider the elements that are relevant to the settlement and urban development throughout time. This approach also allows us to see the historic area under dynamic changes. As Smith (2010) pointed out “the area was the oldest part of the city, but enormously varied because of continuous small scale evolution.”

In the case of the historic Bangkok core, in the past, perception on the history of the area was stagnant. Value identification mostly focused on its components, showing the first settlement or the elements related to the period in which the area was more developed. Considering the historic Bangkok area by landscape approach, both the physical elements and the buildings that were built in later periods are taken into consideration. Such approach supports the variety of elements, considering that different elements of each period illustrate the historical layers and continuity of

urban transformation. Examples of elements which reflect layers of the city’s history are groups of shop-houses built along with main streets. These features represent one of the milestones of urban development in the Modernization Period during the reign of King Rama V.

**Perception on “space”.** According to the international conservation principles that have been used in the past, for example, in the World Heritage Convention, a historic area was considered to be under the category “groups of historic buildings,” or “historic towns and urban areas.” The original definition of the historic area defined the boundary of the area as “historic center” or “ensemble” (ICOMOS, 2005). On the other hand, to consider a historic area as “historic urban landscape” is a combination between historic urban areas defined as “groups of historic buildings” and cultural landscapes defined as “site.” This view pays attention to traditional life and function that characterize the area (Jokilehto, 2008, 2010, p.42; UNESCO, 2011, p.3).

Reading historic areas through a holistic landscape-based perspective, one can see the neighborhood combining with other elements in a “site” covering the structure of buildings, and spatial systems. It also reflects the relationship between urban, suburb, and the outer natural areas (Oers, 2007, p.46; Veldpaus & Roders, 2013, pp.3-4; Jokilehto, 2010, p.42). Considering the area by using this approach, the historic area does not cover only the old city center, instead, it can be connected with other areas based on economic and social development. In this regard, we are able to specify several historic areas which are linked, forming an overview of historic urban landscape. The overall area is more meaningful than the combined values or meanings of each area (Jokilehto 2010, p.47).

In the case of the historic Bangkok area, the historical characteristics of the area are not obviously perceivable since its physical components are not in a homogeneous picture, moreover, several historical layers are presented. In addition, the old city center or Rattanakosin area has been connected to continuous living areas. The use of landscape approaches in conservation helps identify the value of the historic areas which are unclear. It also helps expand the relationship between the city center to the outer areas that have continual

expansion due to later development. Additionally, the landscape approach allows us to describe the historic Bangkok area that is made up of areas in sub-units—urban communities (chumchon) and neighborhoods (yan), based on the recognition of the specific qualities of the area. Chumchon and yan have been developed in relevance to economic, social and cultural contexts, in which local people perceive and remember their meanings, values, and significance (Issarathumnoon, 2017, p. 134). In a broader context, yan can be seen as the place which is formed by a network of urban communities. It is also referable to named places which are publicly known for their distinctive characteristics or specific functions (Askew, 1996; O’Conner, 1983).

The following map (Figure 1) shows the area of Khianniwat-Kai Chae Community in the northern part of the Rattanakosin area. The community is a good example of a long-formed community that still persists. It covers a group of traditional and contemporary houses, narrow lanes of organic forms, and village-like green scenery. Its boundaries are identifiable by local people. Apart from a number of houses, such communities include communal areas, public facilities, and religious places such as local shrines. Another map (Figure 2) shows the layering chumchon and yan in the Rattanakosin city area. It presents complex and unclear layers perceived by local people based on the original formation, the changed forms, functions, and meanings of the places.

## Identifying urban heritage in the historic area

To specify the heritage in the historic area, it is necessary to initially consider on values and integrity of the area before defining the elements that represent its characteristics.

**Values and integrity.** In determining the values of heritage in a historic area, values of all layers of cultural significances should be assessed. The components that should be considered cover components that are part of the economic, social, and cultural development processes which have slowly occurred over time, and the elements that their values have been recognized by people in the

society (Jokilehto, 2010; Veldpau & Roders, 2013). It can be seen that the current means of heritage assessment is different from those in the past, that is, the importance and the beauty of landscape sceneries are given less credit in the assessment.

Regarding the integrity of the historic area, the previously mentioned principles have given much importance to structural and historical integrity. Considerations in the past focused on the integrity of ancient objects, giving priority to historical evidence of the area when it was in the occurrence time, or in prosperous times. On the contrary, the landscape approach pays attention to quality of the area resulting from settlements and physical structures of the town that have been gradually created and changed over time, not just the integrity of the physical elements, nor the completeness of contemporary elements in the same era.

Subsequent to consideration of the completeness of the physical components is consideration of the visual integrity of the area. The quality of the “urban landscape” or “townscape” may not be perceivable as a single large image, instead, the areas should be perceived as a sequence of spaces that are linked with each other.

The landscape approach pays attention to other forms of integrity, that is, the social and functional aspects. Even though social and functional integrity may not be relevant to the completeness of physical components, they help express the historical background of the areas. Furthermore, they help retain urban functions and socio-cultural characteristics of the areas. The social and functional integrity can be determined by various components resulting from production and economic, social, and cultural developments that have occurred in the area, for example, urban function and land use patterns (Jokilehto, 2010).

In the case of the historic Bangkok area, the landscape approach helps identify values and integrity of the area by regarding less the values of tangible elements. In this sense, it is recommended to specify values of heritage in the entire area, and value of the elements that are relevant to the urban development process. The landscape approach also supports the definition of traditional communities in Thailand by specifying that traditional communities are areas that represent the first settlement and

which have continued to the present day. Therefore, their significance should include the city structures, the elements that indicate the initial settlement, such as city walls, as well as the elements related to the later development, such as a group of modern-style shop-houses constructed for expansion of the city in the period of modernization.

Furthermore, the landscape approach helps lessen the importance of physical integrity. Adopting this idea in Bangkok, architectural elements will not have to be changed to the original styles. The decorative elements will not have to be replicated and used in the way it was originally built. Consequently, the history of different eras will not

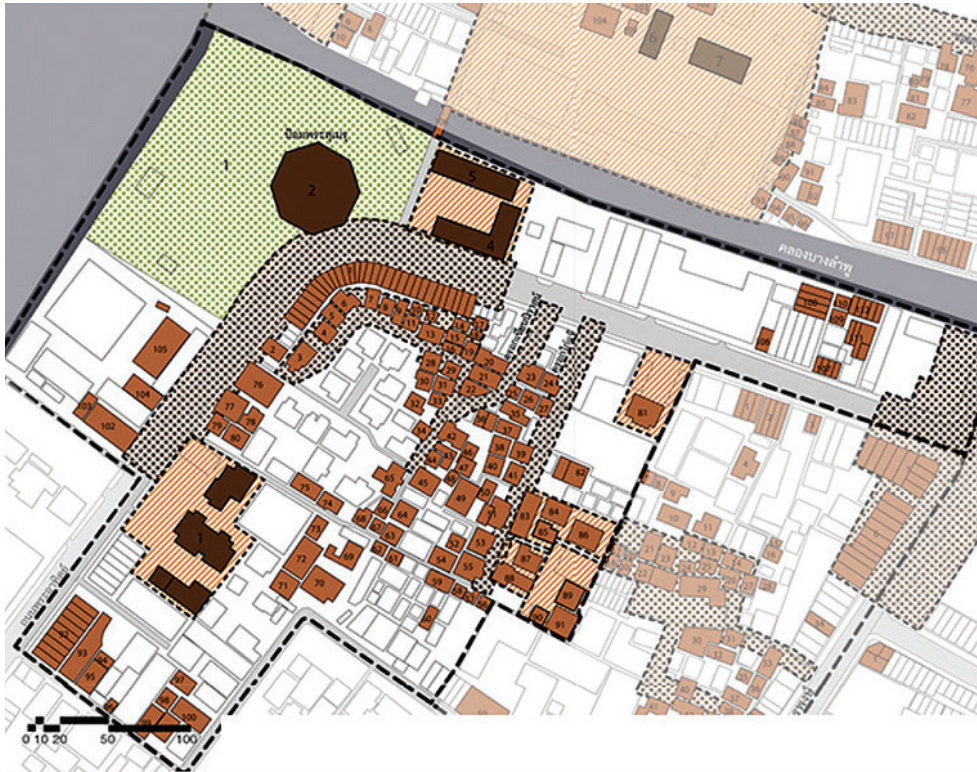


Figure 1:  
Top: Map of Khianniwat- Kai Chae Community, one of long-established urban communities that has persisted until today.  
Below: Photographs of traditional houses located on a small lane inside the community (Issarathumnoon, 2016).



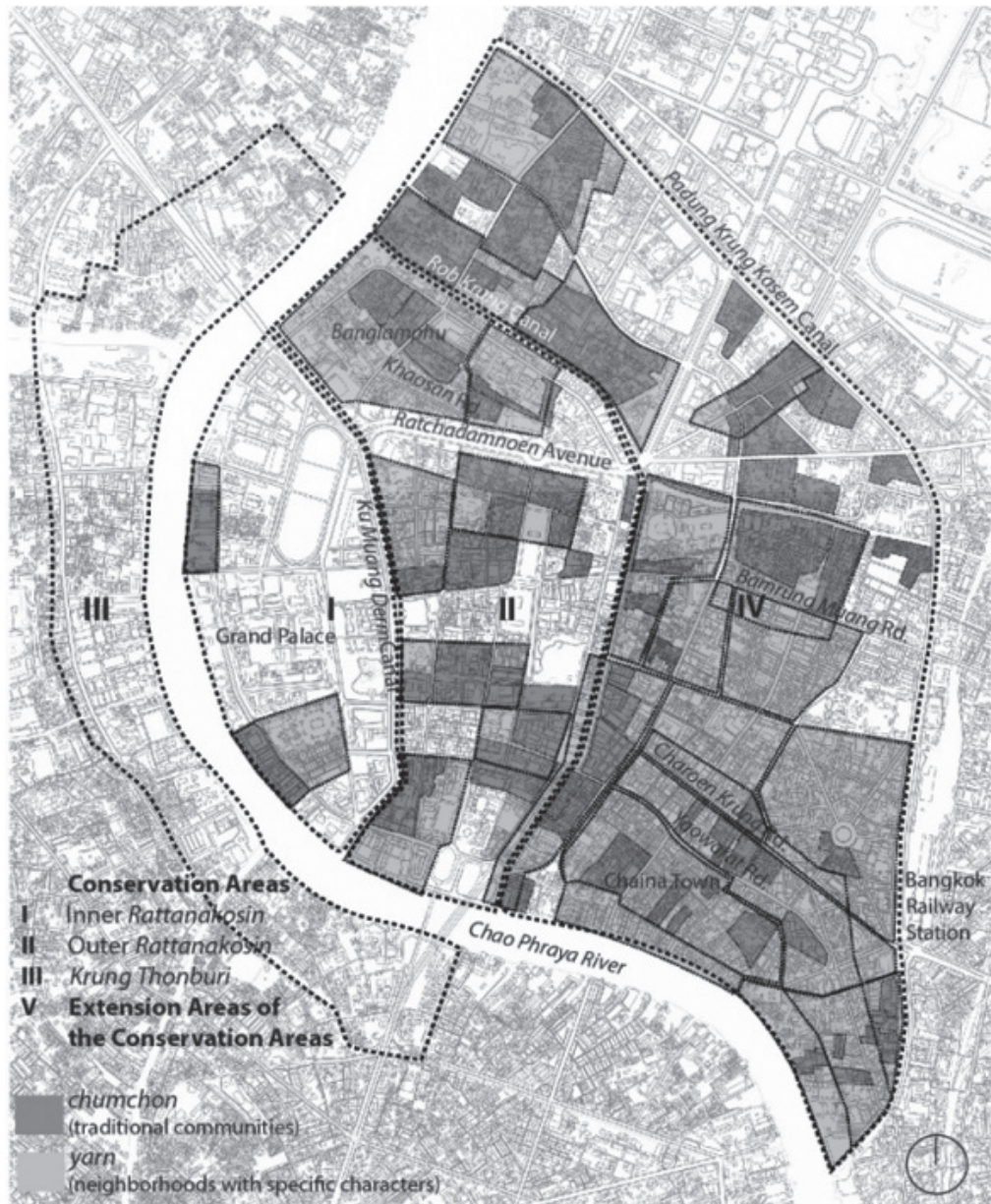


Figure 2: Map: Rattanakosin conservation areas, presenting the complex and vague layers of urban communities (*chumchon*) neighborhoods (*yarn*) (Issarathumnoon, 2016).

be erased as it has been done in certain restoration projects in Bangkok.

**Attributes of the historic areas.** Since the landscape approach considers historic areas as continuous development and change in terms of

society, function, physical structure, and public perception of the area, “inclusiveness” and “integrity” are used as key words for identification of heritage. All elements in the areas are considered how they are layered and interrelated with each other. This is comparable to the coexistence of various elements in the “ecological systems.”

To identify elements in the historical areas, according to the above approach, is different from the method that has been done in the past, such as the inventory process, which focuses much on the identification of static tangible elements with unchanged characteristics. Considering various elements which are related, supported, and affected by each other helps to understand what is causing the risks to diminish heritage values. This helps manage complex changes in the area while preserving the values of heritage elements. In addition to considering the relationships of various elements in the historic area, this approach also considers the relevance of the historic areas to other parts of the city (Jokilehto, 2010; Oers, 2007).

**The elements of heritage in the historic areas.** The key points to identify the elements of heritage in the historic area under the HUL approach are as follows:

- **Tangible elements and intangible elements.** According to Vienna Memorandum, it considers the entire area by considering all elements which are overlaid and interrelated with each other, both tangible and intangible aspects (tangible and intangible elements) are identified.

Tangible elements that have been given more importance, apart from those specified in the previously mentioned principles, consist of urban landscape, areas related to the natural environment, and elements that are related to the settlement (ICOMOS, 2005). Tangible elements cover a wide range of elements, from the inclusive, intangible and without demarcation to separate sub-unit elements that are tangible with clear boundaries. Tangible elements consist of settlement areas with common cultural characteristics (they may not have clear boundaries), urban areas that are interrelated with the natural environment, urban areas or districts with common cultural characteristics in the cluster, buildings that are related to the surrounding context or groups of buildings, urban elements that show the characteristics of the historic city, buildings, and building elements.

Intangible elements that have been given importance comprise urban development and social expressions from the past to the present. Such elements demonstrate the unique characteristics of the place,

that are so-called “place-based” (IBID.). Intangible elements cover the process of development and the changes of the area, which have been relevant to human actions, uses, and physical attributes. Intangible elements consist of the living pattern of people, uses and functions of the area, and the association between people and place, physical characteristics, and architectural styles related to different eras (Veldpaus & Roders, 2013; ICOMOS, 2005).

- **Vernacular elements and elements that demonstrate place characteristics.** According to the HUL approach, heritage in historic areas might not cover only significant buildings or structures, such as national monuments. It also includes vernacular architecture, which is not distinctive or does not have high priority. However, once vernacular buildings are assembled or work together, they help create extra quality or specific place characteristics that can be perceived by local people.

The HUL approach emphasizes vernacular expressions, small-scaled structures, and spaces supporting local activities, e.g., cultural activities, ritual traditions, and beliefs. It also specifies the elements that demonstrate the sense of evolution, and vernacular features that illustrate chaos, disorder, and informality, which helps to maintain the atmosphere of the area. Moreover, it pays attention to the interesting characteristics of the urban landscape such as narrow and winding original roads and architecture with a combination of different styles.

In the case of Bangkok’s historic area, the landscape approach helps identify cultural elements of Bangkok’s Old Town by pointing out the following key points.

The first issue is the focus on townscape, that is, the elements related to the natural environment, and those which are seen or linked to the settlement. Accordingly, cultural elements of Bangkok’s historic area that should be given high consideration are the areas and elements related to the Chao Phraya River and water systems such as canals. Other important elements are those which were created in the early stages of settlement, such as the city walls, and the elements related to the expansion of the city in the modernization era, such as the shop-houses that have elements related to the road. Additionally, the

continuous uses of these shop-houses, which create specific functions of the neighborhoods, should also be regarded as intangible elements.

Generally, historic buildings, especially registered national monuments located in Bangkok's historic area are fully protected. The landscape approach extends the protection to elements and structures, which have less importance. Examples of elements which should be protected include vernacular buildings structures, spatial systems that show characteristics of the area and small and informal elements. Applying this concept to Bangkok's historic area helps identify elements that have been overlooked and have not been protected, such as traditional residential buildings related to small lanes, and local shopping streets in relation to trade patterns.

Specifying intangible elements, the landscape approach supports the protection of continuous and place-based characteristics. Moreover, this approach encourages the maintenance of local living patterns, and the mix-used activities between residential, commercial, and household industries. Protection of these significant characteristics helps maintain the image and sense of place recognized by the inhabitants.

## Defining the key principles of conservation operations

According to the landscape approach, important issues in conservation operations that are different from the previously mentioned principles are as follows.

**New structure intervening in the historic area.** According to the basic concepts of the landscape approach, continuous changes in the historic area are acceptable, including changes of uses, social structure, political context, and economic development, hence, new structures, referring buildings and utilities, must be added in the areas in order to accommodate the changes. Nevertheless, the inserted structures should follow the vision of the city and operational guidelines that have been prepared by the concerning agencies (ICOMOS, 2005).

**Intervention on buildings and areas.** The landscape approach states that the intervention on buildings and areas should be given importance, including construction, addition and adaptation of buildings. The results of these actions are "contemporary architecture." An important point on the intervention is the appropriate integration of conservation into urban planning and management. Intervention should respect the authenticity and integrity of the areas (IBID.). In addition, stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in the conservation process. In particular, living communities should be the key actor in the conservation strategies, since they are both makers and users of the landscapes (Roders & Bandarin (Eds.), 2019, p.9).

**Enhancing quality of life by preserving spirit and place characteristics.** The landscape approach states the importance of place attachment and public recognition of place meanings, which form a foundation for creating a better quality of life, leading to economic, social, and cultural development. The means to enhance quality of life are to preserve tangible elements, and to improve the living and working environment. The proper way in adapting the uses of the buildings is to preserve the characteristics of historic urban fabrics and forms. Additionally, technical standards for the operation, restoration, and development of the environment, based on correct data and evaluation, which effectively present cultural heritage, should be carried out (ICOMOS, 2005).

Considering the conservation context in Bangkok's historic area, the landscape approach helps enhance the conservation system in Thailand compatible with the international conservation standard in several aspects. The first issue focuses on the level of building intervention that not only concerns restoration, but includes other conservation levels that cause changes to the buildings, such as building adaptation, and creates new designs in heritage contexts. It affirms the most important point that the landscape approach focuses on, that is, conservation of heritage creates a better quality of life, along with motivating sustainable economic and social development. For this issue, existing regulations and measures should have their work expanded to enable more revitalizing of all buildings in the conservation areas. Moreover, incentive tools

for promoting creative uses of heritage sites should be created.

The next issue is that design and planning in the historic areas should avoid pseudo-historical design. The new design should be consistent with existing elements in the historic area, in terms of size—height and volume, and proportion. In addition, an attention should be given to the design of public space that serves contemporary uses and historical environments.

The other interesting issue which should be adopted for Bangkok's historic area is the change in conservation methods for the cooperation between conservation and urban development. Firstly, conservation should be included in the vision and guidelines of city planning, and the works of all departments should be synchronized based on the set vision. Secondly, the heritage planning processes, particularly those which are conducted by local authorities, should encourage groups of local community participation. Thirdly, the authorities should give more recognition and find some effective measures for strengthening the local groups which are cooperative in the conservation works. BMA has initiated community participatory programs in heritage planning since late 1900s-early 2000s, including the registration of local communities and recognition of local cultural significance. Consequently, local groups in Bangkok's historic areas have opportunities to be involved in state-led heritage planning and other conservation activities. However, there are still rooms for updating the schemes for broadening stakeholders involvement and fulfilling requirements from various groups of people.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the application of international conservation approaches to localities is useful for the development of conservation knowledge. However, appropriate means should be considered for different areas. Adapting the HUL approach to the existing conservation system of Bangkok's Old Town helps the conservation become more effective. Initially, the conservation concept is changed to a state of acceptance of the changes which have occurred in the historic area. Then, conservation is perceived as

a means for the management of heritage values in the entire area and is included in the broader level of management.

To preserve the historic areas by considering the landscape approach leads to the expansion of the conservation area in both "time" and "space." It helps protect traditional communities by conserving the elements as a whole and enhancing the sense of place.

In addition, the implementation of the HUL approach helps transmit the appeal and unique characteristics of Bangkok's historic area, regarding the diversity of cultural elements, informality, a combination of living and work activities, and shared perception of historic urban landscapes. Finally, the implementation of the HUL approach promotes the design of spaces, urban fabrics, and public utilities to be creative and to consistently benefit the contemporary conservation objectives.

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