

# Urban Policy Supporting Cultural Adequacy in Nang Loeng, Bangkok

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines how Bangkok's planning policy supports cultural adequacy in Nang Loeng, an historic community in Bangkok that is trying to utilise its cultural heritage to achieve housing security in the face of planned developments, such as the building of a new urban rail (MRT) station. The research, through the analyses of the Bangkok Comprehensive Plan (B.E. 2019) and the master plan for the conservation and development of Krung Rattanakosin (Update B.E. 2020), site visits, cultural mapping, and in-depth interviews, uses the framework of cultural adequacy to examine how the current plans and policies consider the cultural heritage of the area and highlight opportunities for enhancing cultural adequacy in the neighbourhood. This research has found that improvements can be made in terms of supporting and valorizing the intangible cultural heritage of Nang Loeng; this cultural heritage was not captured in the development of current plans. Suggestions include comprehensive planning that relies on increased collaboration with area residents and cultural institutions, and the creation of a database for documenting the neighborhood's intangible heritage.

**Keywords:** cultural adequacy, cultural identity, urban development policy, comprehensive plan, Nang Loeng

## INTRODUCTION

Nang Loeng is a neighbourhood located in the Pom Prap Sattru Phai district of Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok, which is a historically important economic and cultural centre of the city. The settlement was established in the early Rattanakosin Kingdom (1782–1932) and is currently an historic and culturally rich neighbourhood with many tourist attractions such as Wat Sunthon Thammathan, Wat Somanat Wihan, Sala Chalerms Thani Cinema, and the Nang Loeng Market, which was officially opened in 1900. In Nang Loeng, the cultural identity of the area is preserved through traditional dance, handicrafts, and food. The people of the Nang Loeng community are aware of the cultural identity of their community and are continuously working to enhance their activities by collaborating with external organisations. Among the community's objectives are the desire to open up community spaces to the wider public and to strengthen their community sustainably.

Another reason why the Nang Loeng community has been consolidating and promoting its cultural assets is to utilise its cultural identity and heritage as an argument for its right to remain in the neighbourhood. As many residents of Nang Loeng do not hold tenure to the land they live on, they are at risk of being evicted or displaced due to gentrification, despite having lived in the area for generations. Much of the neighbourhood is owned by the Crown Property Bureau, and other parts are privately owned by elite landlords (Natakun & Rugkhapan, 2022). The hope is that the cultural heritage of the community can be used to reinforce the legitimacy of the residents' claim that they have a right to live in the area because they have a deep connection and can bring value to it. Additionally, culture can be used to create connections between people and their space, enabling communication through activities and telling stories of the Nang Loeng community through places, people and ways of life.

As mentioned, Nang Loeng is in the Rattanakosin Island area of Bangkok, where housing insecurity has been exacerbated by urban growth, and by the government's urban planning policies. Nang Loeng is designated as one of the neighbourhoods that will be the site of the metropolitan subway (MRT) station called Lan Luang, which is planned to replace one of

the main cultural alleys in the neighbourhood. Residents are at risk of being displaced by developments, such as this plan to build new subway stations in the area, which are being implemented without prior discussion with the residents, and which pose an immediate threat to housing security as well as to the preservation of the neighbourhood's identity.

Housing security arises from the development and promotion of an adequate standard of living, which should be supplemented with economic, social and cultural support. This principle is recognized by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, n.d.), which states that housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity. Therefore, government policies for housing security should also support the maintenance of the area's cultural identity. This research therefore examines the Bangkok Comprehensive Plan (2019) under the Town Planning Act (2019) and the master plan for conservation and development of Krung Rattanakosin (hereinafter "the masterplan") to understand to what extent the cultural identity of the Nang Loeng community has been taken into account.

## Research questions

- How can urban planning policy promote cultural adequacy in the Nang Loeng community?
- To what extent have the policy makers and the Nang Loeng community incorporated the concept of cultural adequacy into their policies or community management?

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Conceptual framework and methodology

This research scrutinizes how Thai planning policy supports cultural adequacy, which is one of the components of the right to adequate

housing, as defined by UN-Habitat. At present, the urban planning policies that directly affect the development of Nang Loeng are the Bangkok Comprehensive Plan (2019) and the master plan for the conservation and development of Krung Rattanakosin (Update 2020). The research utilises in-depth interviews with community representatives and policy makers to examine how the cultural heritage of the Nang Loeng community is affected by these plans, and the extent to which the current urban planning policies acknowledge and support the concept of cultural adequacy. This analysis will make it possible to identify how policymakers can better support cultural stability in residential areas, and what actions can be taken by the Nang Loeng community to enhance the conservation of their local cultural heritage.

There are multiple theoretical approaches to the conservation of cultural heritage in the context of urban development planning. Cultural conservation, like environmental conservation, can be seen as an antithesis or hindrance to development because it often discourages the replacement of existing structures with new buildings or structures. However, the conservation of cultural heritage can also help support sustainable urban development, especially in the aspect of enhancing a city's image and attractiveness (Tavares et al., 2021). This approach views the conservation of heritage not as a hindrance, but as a resource for promoting sustainable development. The importance of culture in enhancing the socio-cultural aspect of development is emphasized by UNESCO (UNESCO, United Nations Development Programme, & United Nations Population Fund, 2015.; UNESCO and World Bank, 2021). Moreover, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Cultural heritage highlights the idea that the conservation of cultural heritage helps consolidate a sense of identity in a community, and that it can also bring economic value to the community or the city through tourism and other activities (Naheed & Shooshtarian, 2022). Another approach to the conservation of cultural heritage is the rights-based approach, which highlights a community's right to protect its cultural heritage and continue its cultural traditions. This rights-based approach to cultural heritage conservation supports the concept of the right to adequate housing, which

encompasses the right to cultural adequacy, as one can argue that communities have the right to preserve their heritage and traditions that are oftentimes tied to certain physical spaces or areas.

According to Gan et al. (2019), cultural adequacy is achieved when the construction, materials, building elements and housing-related policies consider the local cultural identity. The design of housing should be consistent with the local way of life, materials and building characteristics. At the same time, designs should include spaces and facilities for cultural activities. Similarly, Hafezet al. (2021) states that cultural adequacy in housing can be achieved by selecting construction materials and technology that highlight the social and cultural identity of the community, and that housing policies should ensure cultural diversity in order to accommodate the different social needs and different cultures of the residents. Sukhwani et al. (2021) highlighted that the key principles of cultural adequacy are: (1) the integration of socio-cultural peculiarities in housing development policy, (2) the development of public spaces to encourage social and cultural activities, (3) the consideration of the cultural background of residents, and (4) the involvement or participation of the local community in the design of housing and neighbourhoods. Cultural adequacy is one of the seven criteria for the right to adequate housing (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [CESCR], 1991). Cultural adequacy can therefore be understood as an essential component of sustainable development that helps to ensure cultural diversity and identity.

This literature review highlights the three main components of cultural adequacy, namely: (1) Construction techniques, (2) Building materials, and (3) Policies that support cultural adequacy. This research focuses on the policy component of cultural adequacy, and, therefore, includes the examination of the extent to which the urban plans of Bangkok support cultural adequacy and the promotion of local identity, as demonstrated in Figure 1. In Nang Loeng, the study area, cultural identity is expressed through specific cultural heritage, which includes both tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Figure 2). Tangible cultural heritage is connected to the physical development of housing and the built environment of the area, which, in turn,

accommodates the development and continuation of local ways of life as well as cultural practices and heritage that are tied to places and people in the community. Intangible cultural heritage, meanwhile, is connected to the traditions and ways of life of the residents. Applying cultural adequacy principles to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage implies that the cultural identity of the area will be protected and will endure because measures are taken to ensure that the local population is not displaced.

The methodology for this research, as shown in Figure 1, includes in-person observational field work and in-depth interviews. The observational field work comprised on-site surveys to identify different cultural heritage sites and practices in the area, both via visits and participation in community events. The observation focused on understanding and documenting cultural heritage information in Nang Loeng, as well as urban development policies that directly affect the Nang Loeng community. The field research included the following:

- Participating in four community cultural activities between 2011 and 2019 to observe the presentation of cultural heritage in the area of Nang Loeng;
- Participating in two presentations on the concept of the Rattanakosin Master Plan (2020 edition) by city planners to the Nang Loeng community, and a public opinion hearing of the Bangkok City Plan (4th revision) on preserving arts and culture and promoting tourism;
- Performing a three-week site survey to observe and map cultural heritage sites in the study area;
- Meeting with representatives of community leaders and community members in the area in a participative mapping activity to identify culturally important areas in the community;
- A field visit to review and confirm the collected observational and mapped data.

The in-depth interviews with key stakeholders were conducted over four days. The interviewees were:

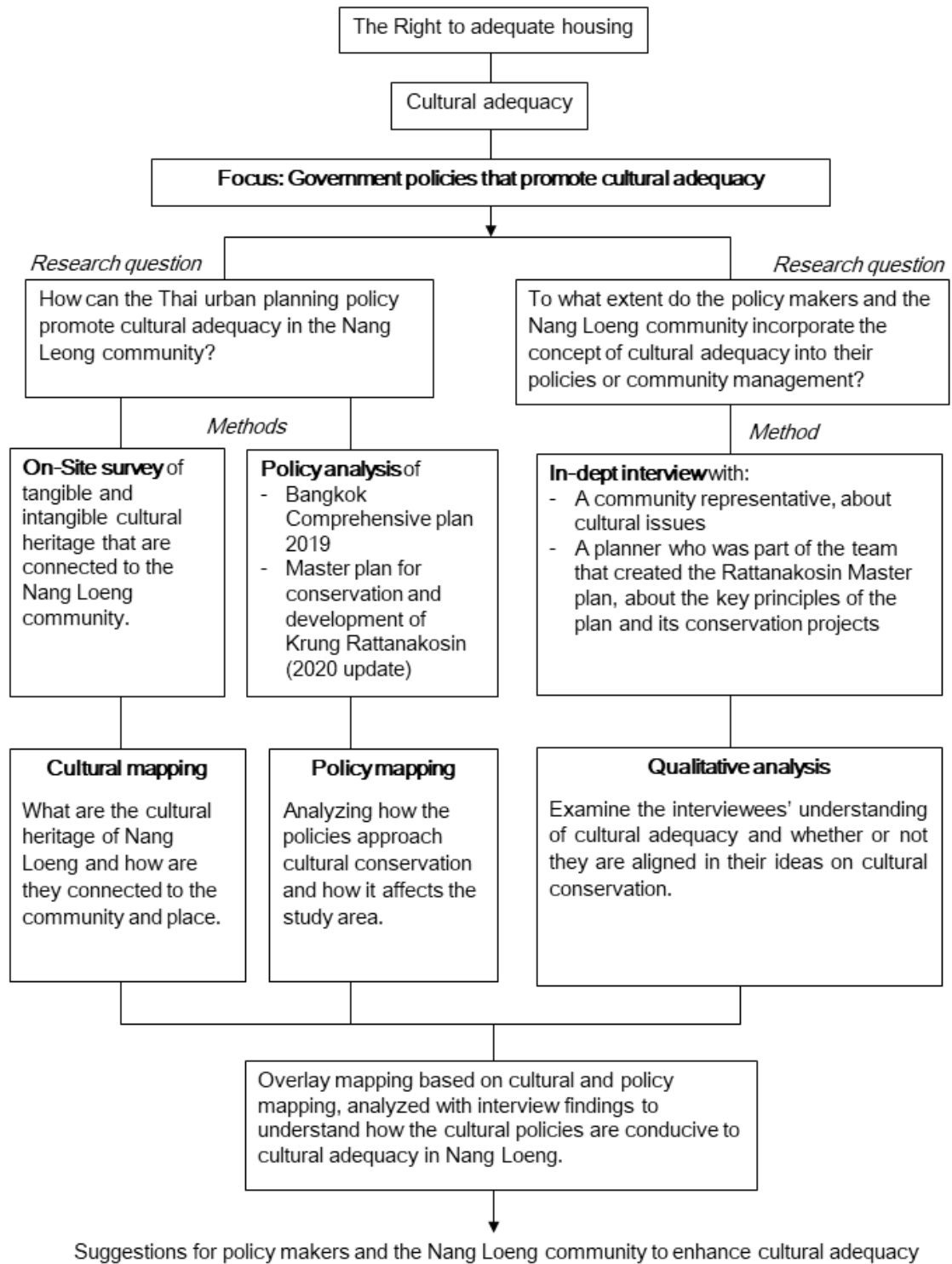
- two representatives of the Nang Loeng community: (a) the president of the community, and b.) a community leader who is active in promoting cultural activities in Nang Loeng, and
- two representatives of the planning authority that created the master plan for Rattanakosin Island. The interviews were semi-structured and were recorded and transcribed. The findings were reviewed for insight into how the stakeholders understand and approach cultural heritage conservation. Policy analysis included reviewing the details of the policies, how those policies align with the mapped cultural heritage, and how they can affect cultural conservation.

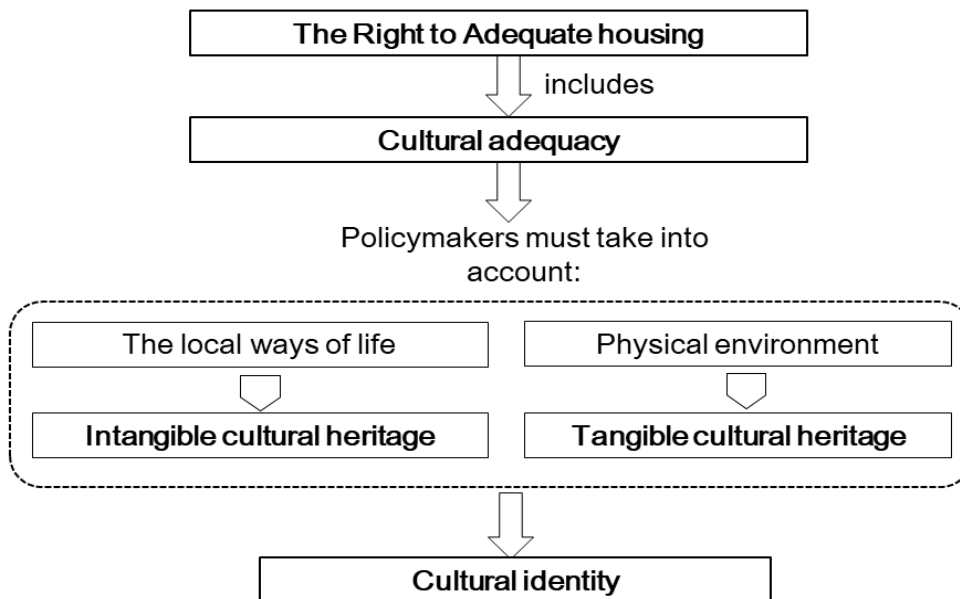
## **Study Area: Nang Loeng Community, Bangkok, and the cultural identity of the community**

Nang Loeng Community is in Pom Prap Sattru Phai district, Bangkok. The researcher framed a specific study area in the centre of "Nang Loeng" around Wat Sunthon Thammathan (Khae nang Loeng) and around Nang Loeng Market that has a clear cultural identity. The area currently consists of 4 communities (Jindamaneerojana, 2010), namely, the Wat Khae Nang Loeng Community, the Chakkraphatdiphong Community, the Suphamit 1 Community and the Suphamit 2 Community. Most of the land in the area belongs to the Crown Property Bureau, Sunthon Thammathan Temple, Somanat Worawihan Temple, or comprises other private property, and the land in the study area is mostly developed with residential buildings and shophouses (housing together with commerce). The lack of land ownership by residents means that, despite having lived in this neighbourhood for multiple generations, they do not have legal rights that guarantee their housing security.

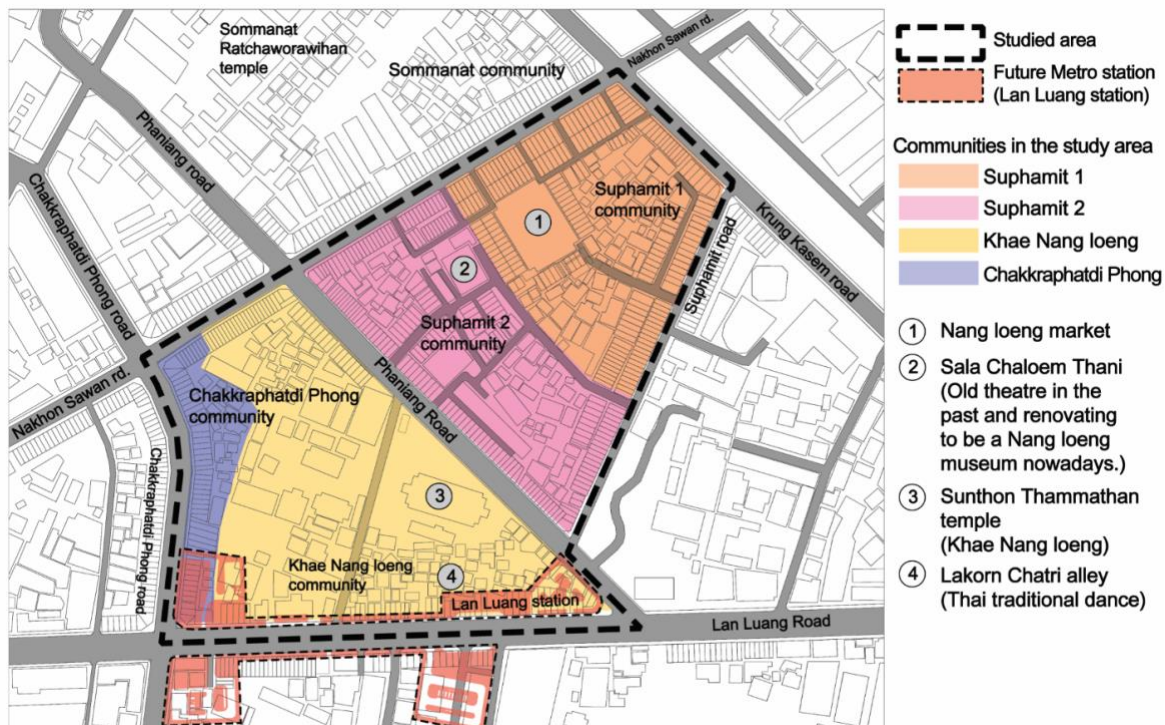
**Figure 1**

*The Conceptual Framework for Research*



**Figure 2***Conceptual Framework on Cultural Adequacy*

*Note.* Adapted from *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, by Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 1966, United Nation (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>). Copyright 1966-2023 by OHCHR.

**Figure 3***Study Area: Nang Loeng Community*

*Note.* Adapted from *MRT Orange Line*, by REALISTADMIN, n.d., Realist (<https://thelist.group/realist/blog>), Copyright 2023 by Realist Solution Co., Ltd.

Nang Loeng is a cultural site in the Rattanakosin Island area of Bangkok that was first settled near the beginning of the Rattanakosin era in 1782, when the area was used for housing and agricultural activities. At the beginning of the 19th century, transport development reached Nang Loeng, and the area was transformed into a commercial and entertainment hub. It was, at that time, particularly well known for theatrical arts, notably the Lakorn Chatri performances which originated in the royal palace (Natakun & Rugkhaman, 2022). Other theatrical arts that flourished in the Nang Loeng area included Khon and Nang Talung. There were also numerous Pipat musical ensembles performing in the area, which cemented Nang Loeng's status as a popular entertainment district. Consequently, businesses emerged to meet the demands of Nang Loeng's visitors, which eventually led to the creation of the Nang Loeng Market. Today, many of Nang Loeng's residents continue to keep these traditions alive to maintain the area's unique cultural identity.

On-site surveys show that the Nang Loeng community has a mix of different tangible and intangible cultural heritage sites and activities throughout the study area that comprise architecture, objects, local food, handicrafts, music and Thai traditional dance. The intangible heritage includes traditions, know-how, and practices that are still active today, though some are at risk of disappearing as there are few persons who are knowledgeable of them. The Nang Loeng community aims to conserve its intangible heritage through collaborative projects with activists, architects and academics. Figure 4 shows the two main cultural sites of the area: Lakorn Chatri Alley at Lan Luang Road, and the Nang Loeng Market, which were both established, along with the Nang Loeng settlement, in the late 19th century. Lakorn or Lakhon Chatri is an historical genre of Thai dance-drama that originated in the late 18th century and features intricate costumes, dance, and music (Plookpedia, 2017). Nang Loeng was the historic centre of this art form, which has been passed on from generation to generation. Lakorn Chatri Alley is an area that brings together both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The historic structures here serve as gathering areas for the Poon Ruangnon dance company, which is led by the current generation

of those who have inherited this art form, and the site used not only for Lakorn Chatri performances but also for social events such as workshops, community art exhibits, and Thai dessert classes, which are open to visitors and tourists. The second site of cultural heritage in the Nang Loeng community is the Nang Loeng Market, which was the first land market in Thailand, opening in 1900. The market hall is surrounded by shophouses with Colonial-era Sino-Portuguese architecture, and the market hall itself is an historical structure. Today, the market is a place where one can find traditional Thai dishes that are hard to find elsewhere, and is especially well known for traditional Thai desserts.

In recent years, there has been an increase in efforts by the Nang Loeng community to consolidate and conserve their local intangible heritage, which has, in part, been driven by the fact that local activists and community leaders believe that doing so will strengthen their effort to remain in the area, and help them achieve housing security (Jindamaneerojana, 2010). The distinct cultural heritage of Nang Loeng makes it a tourist attraction, with most visitors going to the Nang Loeng Market and the Wat Sunthorn Thammathan temple. The Nang Loeng community is active in organising events and activities that, in addition to attracting visitors, are aimed at encouraging residents of all ages to be aware of the area's cultural heritage (Figure 5). The Nang Loeng community aims to promote the conservation of local cultural heritage, and to transform the neighbourhood into a living museum where visitors who are interested in cultural heritage related to the local ways of life, such as food or traditional dance and music, can experience and learn more about that heritage from residents. The Nang Loeng community is also enthusiastic about being a study area for urban development research and artistic interventions by universities or other interested organisations. For example, 'The Dancing House' was a project where an architect firm collaborated with residents to transform an historical wooden house that was a ballroom dancing school from 1950 into a museum space for the community (Openspace and Tar-Saeng Studio, n.d.d), and the 'RE TU DE' event offered an opportunity for visitors to learn from the elderly experts of the Nang Loeng community on how to

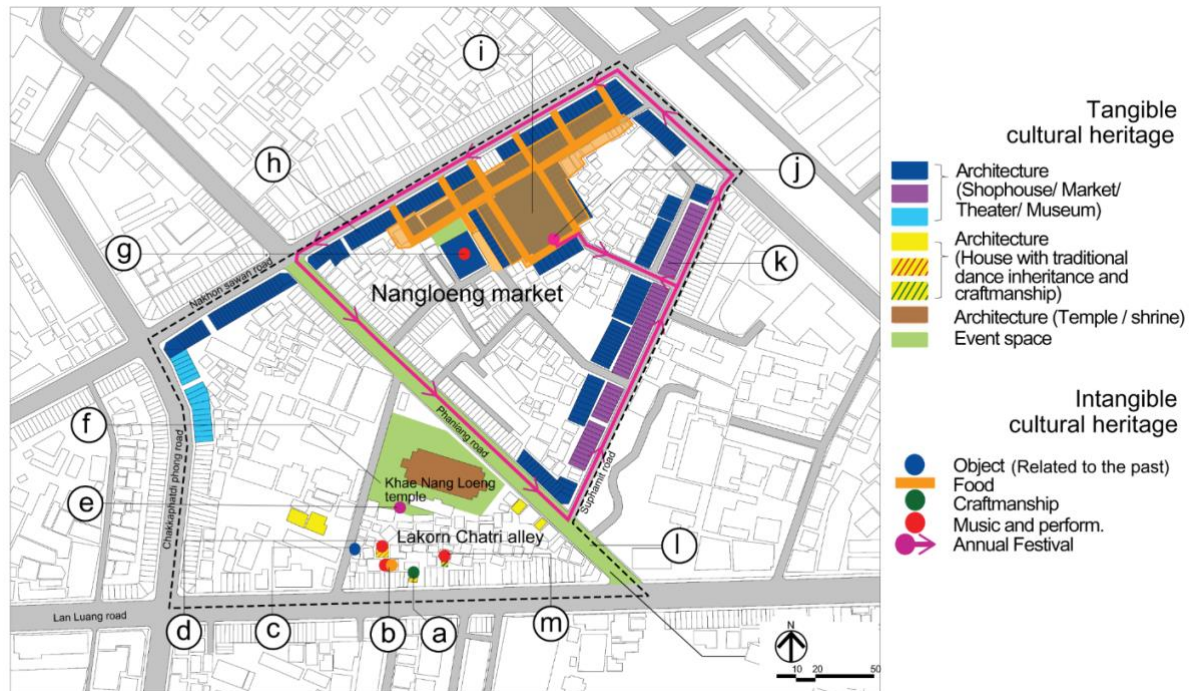
make two different traditional Thai desserts. A Facebook page called “Baan NangLerng” curates posts showcasing and advertising the various cultural events organised by the community.

The on-site survey also highlights that the area designated for the underground metro rail station

is directly in the Lakorn Chatri alley, which is a cultural centre of the neighbourhood (as shown on Figure 3). At the time of writing, the metro station development project is in the public hearing stage (Jindamaneerojana, 2010).

**Figure 4**

*Cultural Heritage of the Nang Loeng community*



**Figure 5**

*Cultural Heritage of the Nang Loeng Community*



**Figure 5 (Continued)**



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)



(k)



(l)



(m)

*Note.* (a) Handcrafting costumes for Chatri dance at Baan Narasilp, (b) Thai dessert class, (c) ‘E-Loeng’jar that gave Nang Loeng its name, and which is a symbol of the creation of the community, (d) Ballroom dancing in the Baan Nang Loeng museum, (e) Memorial event for Mitr Chaibancha, an important figure in Nang Loeng community, (f) Using the temple courtyard for a community meeting, (g) “Beloved Nang Loeng” event in front of the Chaloemthani cinema, (h) An example of Sino-Portuguese architecture along Nakhonsawan Road, (i) Food at the Nang Loeng Market, (j) Worship procession to pay respect at the Krom Luang Chumphon Khet Udomsak Shrine, (k) An example of Sino-Portuguese architecture along Suphamit Road, (l) Children’s Walking Street event on Paniang Road, (m) Poon Ruangnon Lakorn Chatri Dance Company. Consent for sharing these photos has been granted.

## Thailand's urban planning system and the current use of urban planning measures that affect the Nang Loeng community

Thailand uses comprehensive plans to guide urban development through land use control. The study area, Nang Loeng, is designated as a commercial area by the Bangkok comprehensive plan. The purpose of this land use category under Thai regulations is to serve as a centre of activities such as commerce, services, and entertainment. Only mixed-use buildings and large buildings (buildings with 1,000 to 2,000 sq.m of floor space, or higher than 15 floors) are permitted to be built in commercial areas (Department of City planning and Urban Development, BMA, n.d.). It is notable that Nang Loeng is not designated as an area for cultural preservation, which means that there are no limitations on developments in the area if they comply with commercial zoning requirements. The preservation of the historical buildings and structures in Nang Loeng, therefore, depend on

the discretion of the district level planners, and how they value the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood.

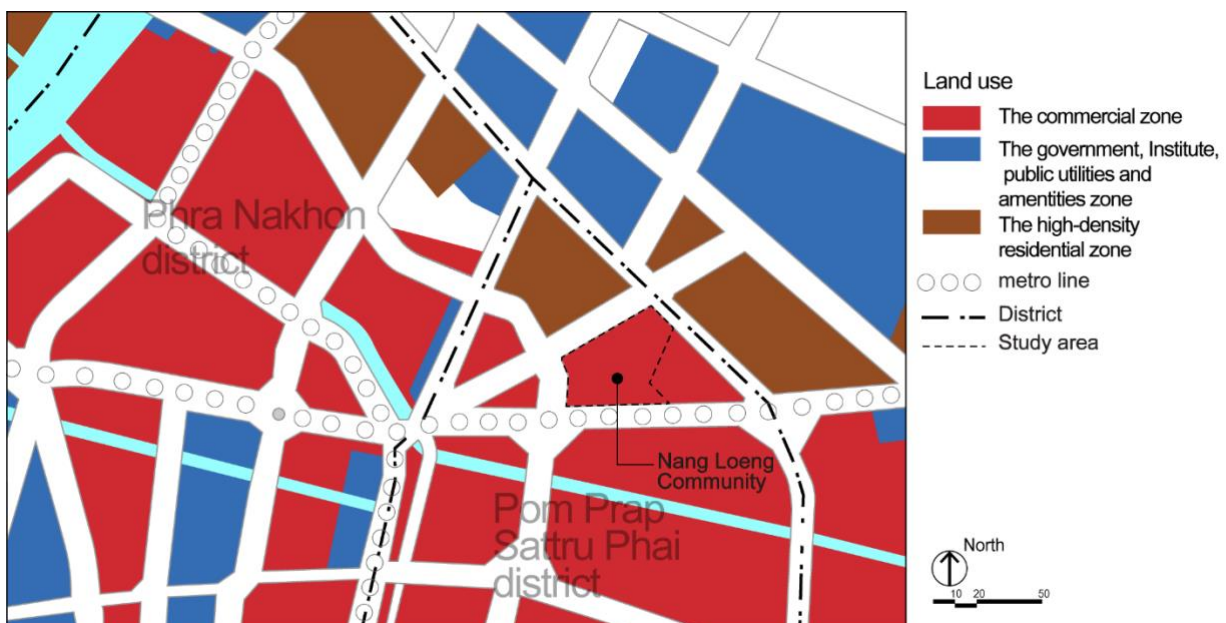
## The master plan for conservation and the development of Krung Rattanakosin (Update B.E. 2020)

The master plan for conservation and development of Krung Rattanakosin (Update B.E. 2020) was prepared by the Department of City Planning and Urban Development of the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority to design an overall policy that defines the development only for Rattanakosin Island (including Phra Nakhon district, Pom Prap Sattru Phai district, Samphanthawong district, Klong San district and Bangkok Noi district), Bangkok.

An in-depth interview with one of the planners who created the master plan revealed that the

**Figure 6**

*Land Use Plan at Nang Loeng Community*



*Note.* The land use plan showing that Nang Loeng and most of the surrounding areas are zoned as a commercial area. Adapted from *The Draft of the Bangkok Comprehensive Plan (B.E. 2019)*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., n.d., PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/pr/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd.

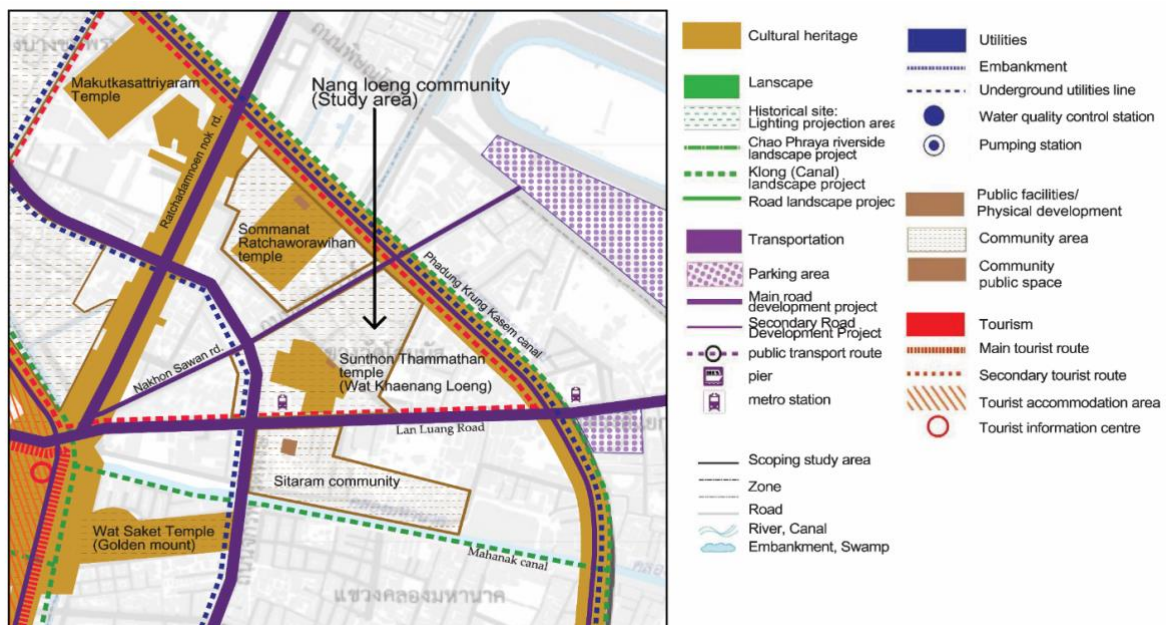
main goal of this policy was to promote the unique values of cultural heritage that exist in this area by making appropriate use of the existing cultural heritage following the principles of sustainable development and maintaining or enhancing the quality of life in the community. The planners reference the definition of cultural heritage from the UN, which distinguishes between tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage.

Nang Loeng was selected to be one of the pilot projects of this master plan, entitled "Project 9:

Nang Loeng-Mahanak" (Figure 7). This is a development project that is aimed at promoting tourism in the Rattanakosin Island area, and the planned touristic route cuts through Nang Loeng. While the plan (Figure 8) is connected to the cultural heritage nodes of the community, only the areas around the Nang Loeng market have been designated as cultural heritage. The Lakorn Chatri alley, where there is distinct cultural heritage, is not acknowledged in the projects of the master plan at all.

**Figure 7**

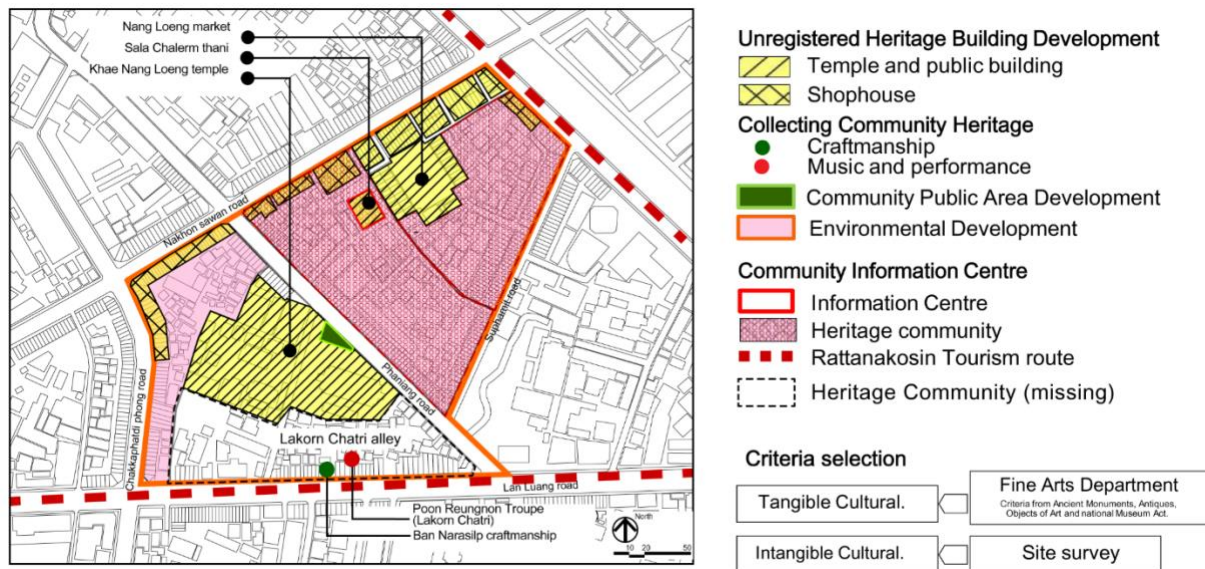
*The Master Plan for Conservation and Development of Krung Rattanakosin*



*Note.* Adapted from *Entrepreneur group meeting: The Preservation of Arts, Culture and Tourism in Rattanakosin island*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., Chotchinda consultant limited, and Daoreuk Communications, 2019, PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/download/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd. and *Working group: The Preservation of Arts, Culture and Tourism in Rattanakosin island [Conference presentation]*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., Chotchinda consultant limited, and Daoreuk Communications, 2017, PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/download/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd.

**Figure 8**

*Projects Related to Cultural Issues, Nang Loeng Community.*



*Note.* Adapted from *Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art And National Museums, B.E. 2504*, by Office of the council of state, 1961, KRISDIKA (<http://web.krisdika.go.th/data/law/law2/%BA10/%BA10-20-9999-update.htm>). Copyright 2017 by Office of the council of state, *Entrepreneur group meeting: The Preservation of Arts, Culture and Tourism in Rattanakosin island*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., Chotchinda consultant limited, and Daoreuk Communications, 2019, PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/download/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd., and *Working group: The Preservation of Arts, Culture and Tourism in Rattanakosin island [Conference presentation]*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., Chotchinda consultant limited, and Daoreuk Communications, 2017, PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/download/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd.

## RESULTS

The policy mapping analysis of the comprehensive plan and the masterplan for conservation in Rattanakosin Island (Figure 8) and cultural mapping of Nang Loeng (Figure 4) suggests that cultural adequacy has not been fully achieved in this area because there is a lack of coherence between the planning policies and the existing cultural heritage items, both tangible and intangible. For example, while the Poon Ruangnon Lakorn Chatri dance company and Ban Narasilp wooden house are designated as having significant cultural heritage by the masterplan for heritage conservation on Rattanakosin Island, the historic street in which they are located, Lakorn Chatri Alley, is not zoned as a cultural area by Bangkok's comprehensive plan.

It can also be said that cultural adequacy can be improved, given that intangible cultural heritage is often overlooked in existing plans. For example, while the Nang Loeng Market is classified by the master plan as an historical monument, and the shophouses around the market along the Nakhon Sawan Road are classified as buildings with historical and architectural value, there is neither mention nor recognition of the gastronomic heritage of the area, which is something that locals and visitors deem as a defining part of the identity of Nang Loeng.

Another important policy in action in Nang Loeng is the Bangkok comprehensive plan, which is a tool of the town planning law that is used to guide development. The current land use control designates the Nang Loeng area as a commercial zone where mixed use and large buildings can be constructed, but does not

include any acknowledgement of the area's cultural heritage or historical characteristics. The designation of the area as a commercial zone could lead to gentrification, which would be detrimental to the preservation of Nang Loeng's intangible heritage. Both the comprehensive plan and the master plan suggest that the policy makers focused only on the development of buildings and not on the conservation of cultural heritage during the plan's creation, which could result in urban development that is guided by the aesthetics of the built environment but not the ways of life of the residents. Moreover, it would be beneficial for the existing plans to highlight the intangible heritage of Nang Loeng; this would help the area become even more attractive to tourists, which is an objective of the master plan. Recognizing intangible heritage as a priority for conservation is important in urban development because it considers the importance of not displacing the local population, who make it viable for the traditions and practices to survive in the area.

In-depth interviews were conducted to shed light on the extent to which the concept of cultural adequacy is prioritized by planners and by the local community leaders. The interviewees were representatives of the Nang Loeng community, who are active in the conservation of cultural heritage in the area, and representatives of the urban planning team that prepared the master plan for Rattanakosin Island, which directly affects the development of the Nang Loeng community.

The interview questions were as follows:

Questions to community representatives:

1. What are the key cultural heritage sites in the area? How are they important to the community?

2. What are your ideas on the preservation of your community's culture?

3. Do you think that cultural issues and urban development are connected? If so, how?

Questions to urban planning representatives:

1. What is the interpretation of "culture" used by the master plan? What references did you use and why?

2. What were the criteria used for the gathering of information about culture in the Nang Loeng community?

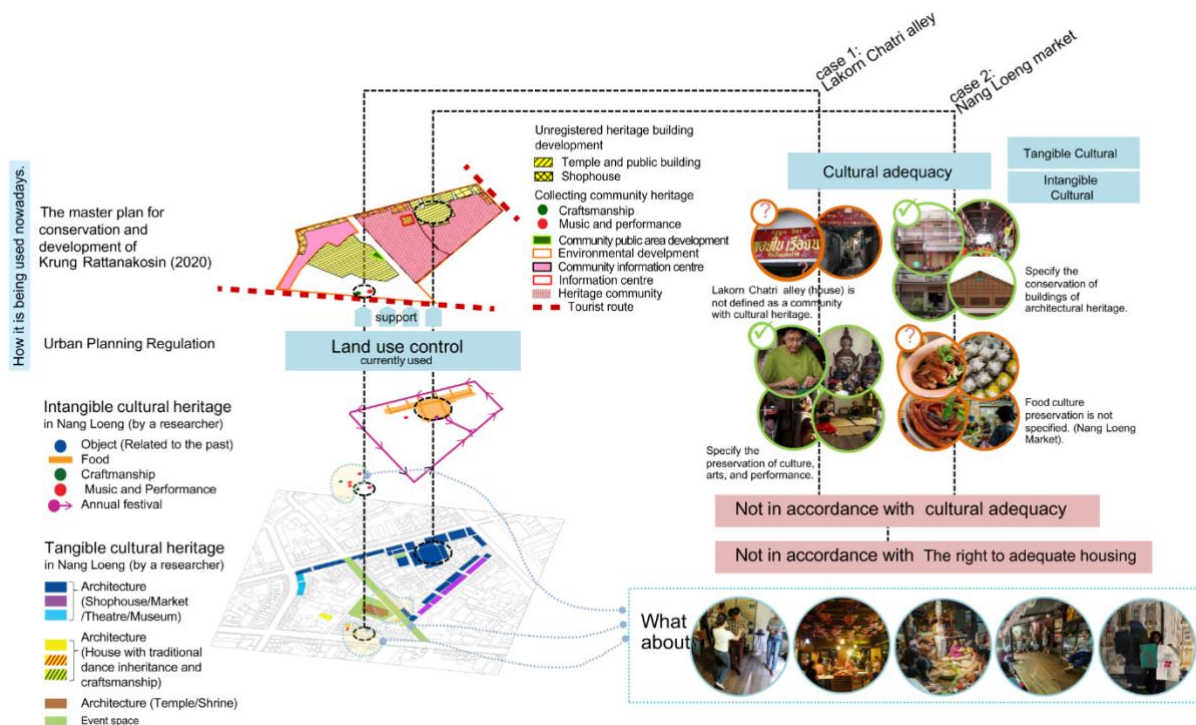
3. How does the master plan approach cultural preservation in Nang Loeng?

4. Do you think that cultural issues and urban development are connected? If so, how?

The interview shows that the planners who created the comprehensive plan attempted to promote the area's cultural identity through the collection of information on cultural heritage, but with the explicit focus on tangible cultural heritage, such as historical physical structures. There was less emphasis on the community-level intangible cultural heritage and on the community's efforts to promote it. This is reflected in the policy that was implemented in the Nang Loeng community, as shown in Figure 8, which focuses on developing the built environment. This policy could be more comprehensive and more effective in enhancing cultural adequacy if it also considered the local ways of life, and by ensuring that development of the built environment is consistent with such considerations. Meanwhile, the Nang Loeng community of residents is heavily focused on promoting the area's intangible cultural heritage and is active in trying not only to preserve but also to consolidate and promote these practices.

**Figure 9**

*Projects Related to Cultural Issues According to the Strategy Specific to the Nang Loeng Community Study Area.*



*Note.* Adapted from *Ban Narasilp Open House*, by Duangkhamchan, J., 2015, Lek Prapai Viriyahpant foundation (<https://lek-prapai.org/home/view.php?id=5362>). Copyright 2011 bylek-prapai.org., *Community Classroom 1-2/11 of Nang Loeng community*, by Nammon, N., 2022, Facebook ([https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10159943106038506&set=pb.575123505.-2207520000.&type=3&locale=th\\_TH](https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10159943106038506&set=pb.575123505.-2207520000.&type=3&locale=th_TH)). Copyright 2022 by Nammom, *E-Lerng Artists Collective: Notable projects*, by E-Lerng, 2007, E-Lerng (<https://communitylaboffici.wixsite.com/e-lerng>). Copyright year by Name of Copyright Holder, *Kid's street: Tha Non Dek Deon*, by P'Miao-Columnist, 2011, Dek-D (<https://www.dek-d.com/lifestyle/23937/>). Copyright 1999-2023 by Dek-D Interactive Co., Ltd., *The Draft of the Bangkok Comprehensive Plan (B.E.2019)*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., n.d., PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/pr/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd., *Town Planning Act (B.E. 2019)*, Office of the Council of State, 2019, KRISDIKA (<http://web.krisdika.go.th/lawHeadContent.jsp?fromPage=lawHeadContent&formatFile=htm&hID=0>). Copyright 2017 by Office of the Council of State, *Working group: The Preservation of Arts, Culture and Tourism in Rattanakosin island [Conference presentation]*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., Chotichinda consultant limited, and Daoreuk Communications, 2017, PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/download/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd., and *Entrepreneur group meeting : The Preservation of Arts, Culture and Tourism in Rattanakosin island*, by Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA., Chotichinda consultant limited, and Daoreuk Communications, 2019, PLANFORBANGKOK (<http://plan4bangkok.com/download/>). Copyright 2023 by Chotichinda Consultants Co., Ltd.

**Table 1***Summary of the Content of the Interviews*

Topic	Urban planner	President of Nang Loeng community
Approach to cultural conservation in Nang Loeng	Nang Loeng's cultural heritage is represented by its physical sites, which provide opportunities to promote tourism in Rattanakosin island.	Both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are important and unique to the community; they connect the ways of life of the community members with the past and present of their place of residence.
Ideas for achieving cultural adequacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The master plan focuses on promoting and developing cultural heritage in Nang Loeng to make it stand out in order to support tourism in Rattanakosin Island.</li> <li>2. A survey was conducted of the tangible cultural heritage in Nang Loeng, as per the criteria of the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture. There was no survey of intangible cultural heritage in the area. The planners also only included information about formally established communities, which is the community around the Nang Loeng market, in the Master plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Nang Loeng community organises activities (some shown in Figure 5) and works together with external organisations to valorise their cultural heritage and promote a sense of belonging among residents.</li> <li>2. The community has an idea to create a community database and online mapping platform.</li> <li>3. The community has initiated the documentation of intangible heritage of Nang Loeng by, for example, using motion capture technology to record the dance moves of Lakorn Chatri, in order to create a knowledge base.</li> </ol>

*Note.* Summary of the content of the interviews with the urban planner who was part of the team that created the master plan for Rattanakosin Island, and the President of Nang Loeng community

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the master plan for Rattanakosin Island includes a project for cultural conservation in the study area, a policy gap exists because the project addresses physical development in a manner that is not consistent with the way of life of the community. The cultural sites (Figure 5) in Nang Loeng that are currently serving as tourist attractions, and which provide space for community activities, should be recognized for their value, and there should be an acknowledgement of how the Nang Loeng community has been developing and passing

down their cultural heritage and traditions for multiple generations since the 19th century. A formal recognition of Nang Loeng community's cultural heritage would help reinforce the community's argument for housing rights in their neighbourhood, as it would demonstrate the historical connection that the residents have to the area.

One of the main threats to housing security that the Nang Loeng community faces is the planned future subway station that is to be built in the Lakorn Chatri Alley (Figure 2). To date, there has been no dialogue between the community and the owners of the subway station project. This suggests that there is a lack of public

participation, and that development planning and policies in Bangkok are still top-down in nature and do not sufficiently consider in-depth information about the community's culture and way of life. If the master plan for Rattanakosin Island had taken a more bottom-up approach, it would most likely have resulted in a more innovative policy that would contribute to cultural adequacy, and would, therefore, develop not only tourism but also the community in a sustainable way.

From the discussion, the following suggestions can be made to the relevant stakeholders:

## Agency responsible for urban planning policy

Thai planning policy consists mainly of controlling land use and density. There are no guidelines for urban service investments or for supporting cultural adequacy in communities. There are also no guidelines on the design of public utilities, facilities, or housing. Policy makers should take into consideration the issue of cultural adequacy in residential areas in the context of the right to housing and create clear guidelines on how cultural adequacy can be achieved in historic neighbourhoods in the face of urban development projects. This is especially pertinent in the historical Rattanakosin Island area, where cultural issues are often given as the main reason for local development. Policy makers should be cognizant of how the displacement of residents for projects such as the MRT station can be detrimental to the cultural adequacy and identity of the area.

In order to achieve cultural adequacy and housing security, stakeholders such as the City Planning Department of the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority should collaborate with organisations that handle cultural affairs, such as the Department of Cultural Promotion of the Ministry of Culture, to create measures to assess and collect all types of cultural heritage information for the creation of guidelines for comprehensive and consistent urban development at all levels. For instance, in recognition of the importance of intangible cultural heritage, the City Planning Department of the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority should

collaborate with the Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture, taking into account the Promotion and Preservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Act B.E. 2559 (Office of the council of state, 2016), which outlines clear processes for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. This act aligns with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. The Department of Cultural Promotion has developed guidelines for proposing national intangible cultural heritage registration, which establishes basic principles for selecting and registering intangible cultural heritage. The Department of Cultural Promotion aims to focus on the conservation of intangible cultural heritage through registration alone, without having yet applied efforts to the urban planning level. Therefore, this research proposes preliminary suggestions for the application of data collection to urban planning by creating guidelines for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. These guidelines can refer to the categorization and collection of data on a community level as specified in the Royal Decree (Office of the Council of State, 2016).

Intangible cultural heritage that cannot be physically grasped is divided into seven categories, including (1) folk literature and language, (2) performing arts, (3) social practices, rituals, customs, and festivals, (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, (5) traditional craftsmanship, (6) traditional games, indigenous sports, and martial arts, and (7) other characteristics as specified by the Ministry's regulations.

Regarding the criteria for selection and evaluation, they should be developed based on the existing registration criteria, including (1) specifying the areas of practice, (2) identifying the names of inheritors or practitioners, and (3) indicating the status of continuity within the community (such as a widespread practice or discontinued practice) (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2022). These guidelines can be collaboratively further developed and used to establish clear criteria for selecting and collecting data on a community level. In the context of the Nang Leung community, the establishment of clear guidelines for the identification of intangible cultural heritage would greatly assist policy makers in urban planning to collect comprehensive data. These guidelines can also

serve as a tool for fostering community participation in the process of collecting a set of cultural heritage data that clearly reflects the relationship between people and the local area within the Nang Leung community.

Regarding tangible cultural heritage, international standards of assessment have been applied in the development of a cultural heritage master plan that is appropriate for the context of Rattanakosin Island. Examples include the Thai Ancient Monuments, Antiques and National Museums Act B.E. 2504, which grants authority to the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture (Office of the council of state, 1961), UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Criteria (Centre, U. W. H, n.d.), and the guidelines for identifying local heritage of the Western Australian Government's Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (n.d.).

The evaluation of values for the collection of tangible cultural heritage can be categorized into five types These categories include:

- 1) Aesthetic values, such as uniqueness, artistic and architectural values, and spatial layout.
- 2) Historical values, such as historical significance and archaeological importance representing a specific period.
- 3) Scientific and educational values, such as educational value or technical value.
- 4) Social and cultural values, such as cultural identity, social identity, or local attachment.
- 5) Condition and size, such as authenticity and the level of deterioration of the heritage site.

These standards can be adapted and applied to the screening of tangible cultural heritage in Nang Loeng's community data collection process.

## Creators of the master plan

While the masterplan and its development project designs are guided by the concept of cultural heritage, the example of Nang Loeng suggests that insufficient information was gathered about

cultural heritage in the area when these plans and designs were developed, and that the aspects of intangible cultural heritage relating to the way of life of the residents were overlooked. The planners should have been more cognizant of the intangible cultural heritage of the area by engaging with local communities and stakeholders, incorporating local cultural heritage and ways of life into the decision-making process, and collaborating with cultural heritage organisations, local activists, and experts to ensure the preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage.

Planners should also have made efforts to mitigate the impact of their proposed plans on potentially displaced residents. The history of Nang Loeng shows that the neighbourhood's main cultural heritage sites, the Nang Loeng Market and the Lakorn Chatri alley, are both intricately linked to the initial settlement of the area. Many of the current residents of Nang Loeng are, in fact, descendants of the first settlers, and have inherited traditions that remain distinct and valorised as the community positions itself as a living museum. In Bangkok, these characteristics are unique to the Nang Loeng community. Given that the goal of the master plan is to develop tourism to Rattanakosin Island, it would be beneficial to support the right of Nang Loeng's residents to remain in the area since they contribute to the neighbourhood's tourism appeal by maintaining its intangible cultural heritage; such support should include recognizing the connection between the residents and the physical space they occupy.

## Nang Loeng community

The community should start a centralised platform for documenting the cultural heritage of their community and neighbourhood, which includes intangible cultural heritage. The interview with a representative of the community found that there is an ongoing initiative to create a website designed to show the location of touristic cultural heritage in the community, and that there is also a project to gather information on intangible cultural heritage, such as documenting Lakorn Chatri dance moves using motion capture technology, and to create a knowledge database for the next generation of

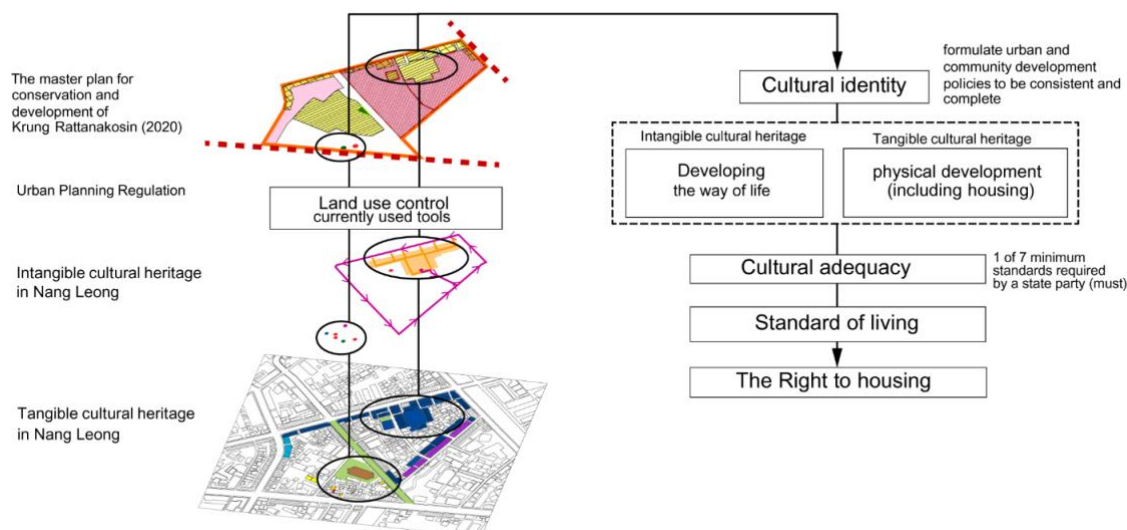
community members and others who are interested in learning this art form.

Given that Nang Loeng is the study area of various research efforts, it would be useful for the community to have a centralised database that compiles information about the community and its residents, which can be categorised as follows: (1) Facts relating to the community and their activities, (2) A compilation of research articles written about Nang Loeng, and (3) A collection of articles and other works produced by the members of the community, e.g.,

documenting the cultural practices that have been inherited and shared with the community (Figure 11). This curated source of information would be useful for researchers and policy makers as well as for future efforts in support of cultural preservation and the community's dialogue with government officials. As the Nang Loeng community is already utilising culture in an effort to enhance housing security for its residents, centralised documentation on the community's history and culture could also help these residents strengthen their argument for the right to remain in the area.

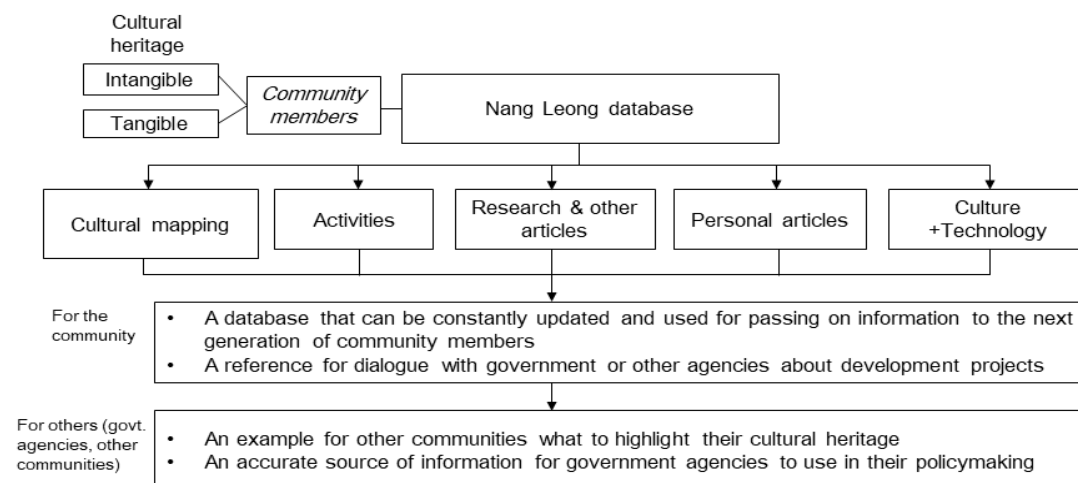
**Figure 10**

*The Suggestions for a Town Planning Policy that Integrates Cultural Adequacy for the Housing of the Nang Loeng Community*



**Figure 11**

*Concept of Creating a Database of the Nang Loeng Community*



## CONCLUSION

In summary, the research found that current governmental planning policies do not currently support or promote cultural adequacy or housing security in Nang Loeng. Instead, existing policies focus more on conserving and consolidating the tangible cultural heritage of Nang Loeng without acknowledging the intangible heritage. Such acknowledgement would support efforts to advocate for the retention of local residents who currently lack housing security. There is a discrepancy between the approaches of the urban planners, policy makers and the community regarding cultural conservation in that the concept of cultural adequacy is more relevant to the local community activists, who are concerned with preserving their traditions and connections to the neighbourhood.

Urban planning policies can help promote cultural advocacy in Nang Loeng by acknowledging the local intangible heritage and the importance of the residents in maintaining the character of the neighbourhood, and by engaging with local stakeholders in order to support the valorisation of the local cultural identity. An example of how urban planning policy can support cultural conservation and advocacy in a way that also considers intangible cultural heritage is found in George Town, Malaysia, where specific plans were created to promote traditional crafts and cultural events as part of the area's urban regeneration. (George Town World Heritage Incorporated, 2023). Such examples can serve as useful case studies for policy makers who are responsible for Nang Loeng's development.

This research recommends that policy makers provide both relevant tools and policies in the process of creating community-level masterplans. Planning policies should consider cultural adequacy issues in the area, in alignment with the right to housing principle, by integrating cultural heritage community livelihood into the master planning process. Policy makers should also create community engagement through participatory tools that collect detailed information on cultural heritage in the community, such as the development of local expert mapping. The design of future masterplans should be comprehensive and driven by bottom-up data collection, using processes such as focus groups and community workshops. In the case of the

Nang Loeng community, an opportunity exists to not only engage with the local community members but also with organisations that have worked with them in cultural and urban development projects.

The research highlights how stakeholders (i.e., planners and residents of the Nang Loeng community) should engage in a process that allows for participation and cooperation to create policies that are consistent, and which support cultural adequacy in a way that addresses both tangible and intangible heritage. This would be an innovative, bottom-up policy that would help enhance the housing security of residents in Nang Loeng.

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether current urban planning policies can support sustainable cultural adequacy, and how such cultural adequacy can be achieved in practical implementation. Therefore, preliminary operational processes are proposed to develop urban planning policies in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. It is recommended to begin by defining the relevant agencies that can establish genuine cooperation between policymakers and the Nang Loeng community. Through examination of the authority and responsibilities of agencies involved in urban planning in Thailand's current context (BMA, (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), n.d.), it was found that the coordinating agency with the most relevant departments for urban planning policy development is the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). The BMA consists of subordinate units with relevant authority and responsibilities, as follows:

1. The Urban Planning and Development Office of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) serves as the main unit responsible for formulating urban planning policies. The office is empowered and tasked with defining policies related to the physical development of the city, urban development, land utilisation, and infrastructure development in Bangkok, as well as with formulating plans, projects, and aligning them with physical and economic development, social aspects, population aspects, urban environment, and others (Department of City Planning and Urban Development, BMA, n.d.).

2. The Culture, Sports, and Tourism Office of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is a supporting agency with authority and

responsibility for promoting, revealing, preserving, and enhancing cultural arts, as well as building awareness, consciousness, and appreciation of Thai values and virtues. The Culture Office can coordinate with the Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture, to develop guidelines for collecting cultural heritage data in the Nang Loeng community (Culture, Sports, and Tourism Office, BMAN, 2018).

3. The Social Development Office of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is a supporting agency with authority and responsibility for promoting and supporting community development in various dimensions, including physical, environmental, economic, social, health, and mental aspects. It fosters community engagement and learning processes, and coordinates and supports the implementation of policies with relevant agencies. The Social Development Office can also act as a coordinator with the Nang Loeng community to facilitate participatory processes, and to collaboratively develop guidelines for collecting cultural heritage data with the Department of Cultural Promotion. Furthermore, it can serve as a central coordinating body for future urban planning policy development in collaboration with the Nang Loeng community (Social Development Department, BMA, n.d.).

This research focuses only on cultural adequacy, which is one of the components that constitutes the right to adequate housing. Future research could benefit from examining all aspects to have a more comprehensive overview of housing security in Bangkok.

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