

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY and PRODUCT BRANDING DEVELOPMENT:

Craft, Design & IP Collaboration for Creative Crafts

A case study of Bangchaocha Bamboo Basketry Community,

Phothong District, Angthong Province

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ABSTRACT

Under the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) program for the Intellectual Property and Product Branding for Business Development in Developing and Least-Developed Countries, Thailand was nominated as one of the three countries prepared for the study of IP tools implementation and the geographical indication and collective mark preparation. In Thailand alone the stakeholders including the international expert and state agency collaborated with local consultants and conducted a series of research in three communities. Two of them focused on woven fabrics of the Northern Provinces, namely Chiang Mai and Lamphun; whereas the other, Bangchaocha Bamboo-Wickerwork Community in Ang Thong, a Central Province, was selected for a case study and discussion of this paper.

For helping Bangchaocha community developing their products, three collaborations were carried out between: 1) local masters and design students, 2) local craftsmen and professional designers, and 3) local school children and design students. The design outputs from the three collaborations comprised of four different approaches, which are: a) products for generating income, compliance with needs of Bangchaocha's existing customers; b) products of indigenous crafts, a collection of hybrid traditional-modern crafts for home decoration; c) products for strengthening the community, to be produced and consumed within community; and d) products for enhancing the experience of Bangchaocha Bamboo indigenous crafts. Once the outputs had been carried out, the IP expert came in and trained the

villagers for better understanding in the IP tools and its benefits as well as helped register Bangchaocha products with collective marks. In the end, it was proved that IP tools can help raising awareness in these products' uniqueness and originality, only that it needed a series of detailed works of production quality control to ensure its novel value. Thai communities and consumers are considered new to this IP product, therefore the public awareness raising activities should be provided as well as the clarification and art of product display should be developed to help consumers to easily identify and understand the value of these IP products.

#### KEYWORDS

Geographical Indication, Cultural Heritage, Intellectual Property, Product Branding Development for Community, Creative Craft

#### FULL PAPER

The utilization of intellectual property (IP) as a tool to protect and mobilize communal cultural heritage has been practiced and shared during the past decades. The history of Geographical Indication (GI) protection has shifted the emphasis from physical geography (soil, climate etc.) to the human or cultural contribution, which redefined the character of the link between human, making process and place. This recognition of collective human inputs in turn created the space for accommodating cultural heritage arguments. GI protection for crafts and textile products is an ongoing experiment, mostly in the realm of sustaining local or regional cultural heritage, via the market-friendly option with GI protection. This practice offers a practical solution among community more generally concerned with the protection of their communal cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup>

In "Geographical Indications and Cultural Heritage", Gangjee explained that, for craft, GI is used for identifying a good or a product as originating in the territory of a member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. In other word, GI is exploited to demonstrate a link between the origin of the product, the unique characteristic in the craft making process of particular group of craftsmen, and the use of particular materials found in the geographical origin area. Therefore, the collective dimension of the origin-linked product strengthens social linkages among local actors, while the promotion of an origin-linked product increases self-esteem among local craftsmen as their identity and related way of life is recognized and valorized. In a larger scale, GI also help protecting important elements of local cultural heritage, for instance traditional production methods and ways of life.

This paper aims to discuss how intellectual property role can enhance cultural heritage management in local scale. It will also illustrate applicable and self-sustain collaborating mechanisms between local actors and designers in building their capacity in product development and branding using intellectual property as a framework, based on the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) scheme - *the*

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<sup>1</sup> Dev S. Gangjee. (2012). Geographical Indications and Cultural Heritage, The WIPO JOURNAL: Analysis of Intellectual Property Issues, Volume 4, Issue 1, pp. 92-94, Peter K. Yu (ed.), Thomson Reuters (Professional) UK Limited and contributors.

**Intellectual Property and Product Branding for Business Development in Developing and Least-Developed Countries.** The nomination of *Bamboo Wickerwork* from Bangchaocha community, Anghong Province was then selected by WIPO as the case study.

The collaborating project was carried out by three key stakeholders of 1) the international intellectual property expert appointed by WIPO - the **Rouse & Co. International (Thailand) Ltd.** whom authorized to identify and map the selected products with the potential IP tools, 2) the local government agency - **Department of International Economic Affairs**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, whom involved by strengthening the project through its underlying international trade policies and by mobilizing the stakeholders' involvement and commitment, together with 3) the local consultants – the **School of Architecture and Design, KMUTT** as a local expert on product and branding development for Bangchaocha Bamboo Wickerwork community. The international and local experts worked as a team and were responsible for three main work components: a) branding strategy recommendation and intellectual property protection pertaining to the community b) product development capacity building workshop, and c) creating public awareness and activities to promote IP and its socio-cultural value-added products. Therefore the project framework were divided into 3 phases which are 1) Benchmarking Activities, 2) Community Strategic Plan and Capacity Building Workshop, and 3) IP Promoting Activities.



Diagram 1. Project Framework Diagram

The community will be assessed to determine their social organization and values, human resources management, cultural asset management and technological development. Then the appropriate IP tool (Geographical Indication or Collective Mark) will be recommended by the IP expert of how to apply the particular IP tool to their craft business as well as the introduction of IP values, benefit and protection to the community. IP tool utilization as for prolonging communal cultural heritage, this strategy, based on WIPO's guidelines, could be regarded as a key driver for local/rural development, both in terms of economical and socio-cultural development. Its future implementation will hopefully attract more like-minded local craft producers with whom we can establish a national strategic marketing alliance and therefore reinforce craft community bonding at a larger scale<sup>2</sup>.

**PHASE 1 - BENCHMARKING ACTIVITIES**

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<sup>2</sup> WIPO Project on Intellectual Property and Product Branding for Business Development in Developing and Least Developed Countries (LDCS), Fifth Session, Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP), April 26-30, 2010, Geneva.

This benchmarking phase was designed to help the consultant team understand Bangchaocha bamboo wickerwork community of their contextual business, group organization and management, group productivity, market and trading channel, and group perception on how they see themselves today and in the future. As recommended by The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the assessment framework was designed based on the 3 pillars of sustainable community development – social, economic, and environment, yet we put more emphasis on ‘people’ and add one more pillar of culture<sup>3</sup>. Several qualitative research techniques were used during the benchmarking activities – small group discussion, participatory observation, and life history interview. A pilot study of stakeholder analysis also took place for identifying the key informants - local authorities, key institutions, village scholars, group leaders and their members, young entrepreneurs, young kids and their teachers as well as governmental agents from Industrial Promotion Center Region 8 and Community Development Department. And since Bangchaocha bamboo weaving community are divided into several small groups, all the groups know each other and in most cases are relatives or long-time neighbors, therefore the assessment was run in a very sensitive manner.

### 1) Bangchaocha Community Background

Bangchaocha community is located in Ang Thong province, a small province at the lower part of central Thailand. Its geographical origin is a low plain area with two important rivers, Noi and Chao Phraya, crossing the province. Bangchaocha is renowned for its native intricate bamboo wicker works and has reached its peak as a supreme bestowal for the royal court during Ayutthaya period. Most of their wicker artifacts are related to the community’s agriculture and domestic life daily routine, for instance, a rice storing container, a fruit orchard container, a fish trap, and many household-use items. Kra-Bung, a rice storing container; Kra-Jad, a multipurpose container used for carrying goods; and Ta-Kra, a common basket of old time, where its usage equivalent to modern day handbag, are among the most common artifacts which every Thai household used to produce themselves and own. With a sophisticated form, finely details and craftsmanship, these unique utilitarian artifacts are not only possessed aesthetic value but also excellent in their practical functions, as seen below (fig. 1).



Figure 1. Kra-Bung – a rice container, Kra-Jad – a multipurpose container, and Ta-Kra – a common basket (photographed by the author).

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2008). Creative Economy: A Feasible Development Option. Authorized Reproduction by Department of Intellectual Property, Thailand.

**2) Bangchaocha Craft Business**

Most of Bangchaocha micro enterprises are independent, but sometimes allied for better bargaining. Each enterprise has their own weaving members, together with a craft master whom very good at breaking down the pattern and weaving structure of the prototype basket. All groups produced similar bamboo basket-handbags, which are made in various shapes and sizes, both in traditional simple look or fancy contemporary style. Only one or two groups possess their own unique design and special secret know-how. Since Bangchaocha craft groups position themselves as a handicraft manufacturer, they export their basket-handbags to quite a few parts of the world – Japan, North America, France and Malaysia. By made to order basis, Bangchaocha villagers gain sufficient income through lot order from foreign traders, for instance, Japanese traders whom order variations of colorful and refined ladies' handbags to be carried with kimono dress<sup>4</sup>. To do so, Bangchaocha villagers have undeniably overlooked some of their traditional designs which they see un-match to customer needs. They also streamline their weaving process to enhance the efficiency of



Figure 2. Bangchaocha various basket-handbags. (photographed by author)

their craft production line - make it faster, more conforming in size, and produce no defect. Each craftsman now is responsible for producing only one part or two of the basket. Even though the change helps increasing productivity, but at the same time it risks the loss in traditional knowledge and wisdom. Despite the fact that the streamline process has increased the quality of Bangchaocha products, it provides Bangchaocha a very strong competitive advantage. Many foreign traders prefer them because these large volumes of handicrafts are all standardized in parts and sizes, and sometimes they order unfinished products, paint and decorate under their trademark before selling to the end customers.

	Product	Production	Productivity	Market channel	Price
Fact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional basket and handbags</li> <li>Contemporary handbags</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mould making</li> <li>Bamboo preparation</li> <li>Color dye</li> <li>Weaving</li> <li>Smoking, optional</li> <li>Rim &amp; base finishing</li> <li>Fabric lining</li> <li>Handle attachment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25-40 craftsmen in each group, producing 300-500 pieces in 2-3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village showroom</li> <li>Alliance / Middle man showroom</li> <li>Government OTOP &amp; gift fair</li> <li>Private company CSR order</li> <li>Phone order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade A-1,300 B.</li> <li>Grade B-750 B.</li> <li>Grade C-300-470 B.</li> <li>Wholesale price discounted 30-50%</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Rouse and Co. International. (2012) Progress Report on Intellectual Property Protection and Branding Strategies Benchmarking for Bangchaocha, prepared by Fabrice Mattei and Dr. Akkharawit Kanjana-Opas, International Consultants to WIPO, January 6, 2012.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Evaluator's Perception</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very fine and intricate weaving with nice color combination.</li> <li>• When making large quantities, size of products is equal.</li> <li>• Products develop according to buyers, customize by order.</li> <li>• The groups seem to be behind in trend and seem to make only what they are comfortable with.</li> <li>• Difficulties with protecting bamboo from insects and mold still persist.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group leader responsible for getting order, price negotiating, product customization &amp; color scheme, distributing workload &amp; keep track of schedule, submit order.</li> <li>• One task for one craftsman for quality control and also one craftsman make a complete handbag.</li> <li>• Mold making is very crucial for product variations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no fixed income for the weavers, depends on capacity and the difficulties of the pattern.</li> <li>• Sometimes group allied with other groups to get big order.</li> <li>• The weaving groups need to collaborate with rattan craftsman and mould maker in the village.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No own brand, but plan to have one.</li> <li>• Public marketing campaigns by local weavers are still limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buyers and traders negotiate a lot to get the best low price.</li> <li>• Do not have formula to calculate capital cost.</li> <li>• Wholesale price is not set according to time and capital cost, sometimes members subsidize these hidden costs.</li> <li>• Do not show transparent group income and profit sharing.</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Group Expectation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop modern handbags</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand market to younger target groups</li> <li>• Create a brand, promotional tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need extra business knowledge and formula for estimating a worthwhile retail price.</li> </ul>

Table 1. Community Assessment Data

Sometimes when the trades with international clients are uncertain, the villagers need to expand their target market by supplying the same products but with less quality to domestic customers who fancy Japanese kimono-inspired handbags. When their products become so popular, many villages near by try to make similar copycat products. And since Bangchaocha craft groups have no brand yet, in many times customers cannot recognize Bangchaocha products and confused.

As Bangchaocha craft business has faced adversity in many ways, thrive in sustaining their indigenous knowledge, while constantly developing their local craft identity, to keep up with the markets, which dominate the types, styles, quality and price of the products, they also confront with the drop in human capital and natural resources. Modernization phenomenon is common to most provincial areas in Thailand, including Bangchaocha. The indigenous knowledge transfer has been disrupted because it is too time-consuming to make crafts as in the old way and in fact there are not so many of the young generation want to pursue this career path.<sup>5</sup> In short, the relocation of young generation to work in bigger cities, the decline in agricultural-based profession, and the replacement of handicrafts by mass-produced commodities, have transformed the local craft production and resulting in the risk of losing indigenous knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> Poonpol, Duanggnern. (2004). Local Arts and Crafts and Production as Influenced by Cultural Ecology. Institute of Research and Development, Silpakorn University, Thailand.

<p><b>Social aspect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small groups scattered with a little competition, though when needed, some of them are quite unite.</li> <li>• Most of current weavers are female elders; young teenagers do not want to pursue bamboo weaving craft business.</li> <li>• Most elders are willing to help train members for their knowhow and advanced techniques.</li> <li>• Most of the locals feel proud of their communal craft reputation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Economical aspect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An inconsistent of supporting funding by government agencies.</li> <li>• Price settings are very low, compared to work output, time consuming, and special weaving skill required.</li> <li>• A proper profit model and social enterprise model are needed to introduce trust and transparency to Bangchaocha community, together with a financial plan and training.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environmental aspect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raw material, Peeh-Suk bamboo in local community has been decreased dramatically, with the increase of bamboo weaving groups, they imported bamboo from Chonburi province.</li> <li>• Bangchaocha bamboo products are chemical dyes. A natural dye can also be used as a product strategy for Bangchaocha green product.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural aspect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The transfer loop of intangible cultural heritage has been disrupted by the new contemporary lifestyle and changes in attitudes and values in young generations.</li> <li>• Bamboo weaving is a common and a shared cultural heritage among provinces in the same region, for instance, Ang Thong bamboo weaving may shared some features and characteristics with bamboo artifacts from Singhburi province.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Technological aspect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitation on mould design since weavers need to rely on other wood-craft experts.</li> <li>• Some weaving patterns and techniques are already lost, since the craft practice business lies mostly on typical weaving pattern and technique for faster result and less time consuming as well as to meet with contemporary consumer preference.</li> <li>• Possibility in mass customization since most of the processes are handmade and rely on an individual skill and creativity.</li> </ul>		

Table 2. Community Assessment Key Insight

### 3) Appropriate IP tool for Bangchaocha

The identification of the products and their benchmarking had been conducted by IP experts, including the local producers' awareness and the assessment of GI applicable potentials products according to the following four criteria – market, technology, intellectual property and social impacts. The identification of (a) the product (e.g. its specific quality and reputation), (b) the place and the specific local resources, and (c) the people of their collective dimension (e.g. collective process and creativity, collective interests and actions) were also studied and analyzed how these factors link to the specific quality of the product (e.g. raw material acquisition, history of the product). Other considerations included rural and sustainable development awareness, sustainable of resources and biodiversity awareness, willingness to mobilize the local community.<sup>6</sup>

Bangchaocha community developed many successful methods in improving their bamboo handicrafts. Innovative ideas were used to make new types of crafts by adapting and modifying traditional types of artifacts and turning them into useful household items, gifts, souvenirs and toys. These new products still preserve traditional patterns and styles, but have been value added by finding a new use and

<sup>6</sup> Rouse and Co. International. (2011). Executive Summary Report on Intellectual Property Protection and Branding Strategies Conceptual Scheme for Bangchaocha, prepared by Fabrice Mattei and Dr. Akkharawit Kanjana-Opas, International Consultants to WIPO, November 1, 2011.

market for local indigenous knowledge. The link between Bangchaocha, its community and its products is strong and based on religious factor, human creativity factor (traditional know how), and local natural raw resources. Since the history of bamboo wickerwork of Bangchaocha lied on the well-being and self-reliance way of life, linked to Buddhist principle, along with the meticulously made handicrafts of their forms, patterns, and techniques, they are in fact a shared-cultural heritage within the region. In addition, the availability of raw materials in Bangchaocha has been decreased dramatically, hinting the local community for their conservation efforts. These threats had proved that the GI application might not be appropriate for Bangchaocha community at this stage, where as the collective trademark can be used to promoting their collective interest and action in practicing bamboo craft design.

### **PHASE 2) COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN AND CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP**

From insights found during the benchmarking phase, a strategic plan for Bangchaocha community was proposed to (1) introduce 'design' as a connecting element to bridge the link between craft wisdom preservation and commercial craft product development, (2) retrieve the indigenous knowledge and cultural and artistic identity of Bangchaocha bamboo wickerworks through design thinking and activities, (3) empower local craftsmen and villagers with an awareness of their own cultural roots, and (4) develop sets of bamboo products which reflected Bangchaocha local identity and create a collective mark to value add their products. The study on how craftsmen, other locals and stakeholders think and value Bangchaocha communal identity and their community collective mark was also taking place. The protocol for the capacity building workshop on product and branding development was carefully planned. The challenge is how to encourage the learning and collaboration between local craftsmen and the outsider – KMUTT design students. Nevertheless, the differences in worldview and lifestyle of the two alienate groups was hope to build some advantages for the collaboration. And since Bangchaocha is left to have only middle age to elderly craftsmen living with their young and teenage grandchildren in the village, there was a limited human resource and solution. Therefore the design student role is set as a connecting agent<sup>7</sup>, to link between the two-age generations and between the community and outside market. The research team also invited professional designers with different backgrounds to join the workshop, interestedly and excitedly to see how product designers from multidisciplinary team, a freelance textile designer, or an architect perceive and interpret Bangchaocha communal identity. All groups of craftsmen, young local children, design students, and professional designers are assumed to actively disseminate and exchange their knowledge and experiences through series of meaningful dialoguing and activities<sup>8</sup>.

The collaboration between designers and the locals was then carefully structured into three different tryout mechanisms – 1) master and apprentice model, 2) user-centered design model, and 3) designer and maker model, based on different intervening approaches and roles. When looking at the three

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<sup>7</sup> Ranjan M.P. (2010). Creativity & Design: Bamboo for Rural Development. Seminar: Creativity and Self-Reliance Craft Development in Asia, 9th June 2010, Thailand.

<sup>8</sup> Veerapattananirun, Prateep. (1999). Community Learning & Knowledge Management. Retrieved from [http://sites.google.com/site/banrainarao/column/learn\\_commu](http://sites.google.com/site/banrainarao/column/learn_commu). 18 May 2014.

mechanism closely, the master and apprentice model provided the opportunity for design students and craftsmen to build their utmost intimate relationship and empathy for one another, while the second model of user-centered design mechanism employed a participatory action research method and co-creation process which both young local children and design students were influenced on one another. It is also crucial to cultivate a co-learning atmosphere at this specific process, so the teaching and learning approach was set in a fun and relax mood, where design students performed as the young children’s playmates. And the third collaboration, designer and maker model, simulated a distant relationship in the recent popular practices between designers and craftsmen. This model offered designers an opportunity to look at Bangchaocha situation from a far, with a more holistic viewpoint. The study also put focus on the acquisition of inspiration among workshop participants, the series of design activities performed during the workshop, and the possibility of long-term low-cost and practical partnership program between education sector and sub-district level.

Before the collaboration begin, series of preparation session was carried out to help design students and professional designers to understand workshop aims and to flow with the same direction. An international seminar on Creativity and Self-reliance Craft Development in Asia was arranged. There were international experts sharing their experiences about how design can contribute to sustainable community development, how design and craft can co-exist with one another, and how to transform Thai cultural-heritage features into modern contemporary design. Two small workshop sessions were also added in this preparation phase, one with a professor of Thai local bamboo craft historian and another one with a bamboo craft master. This preparation session was probed to be the crucial part of the capacity building workshop, since it helped adjusted the participants’ mindset and geared them to be in line with the project objectives and goals.

Community Strategic Plan & Capacity Building Workshop		
Seminar on Creativity and Self-Reliance Craft Development in Asia & Workshop on Thai Local Bamboo Craft History & Basic Bamboo Craft Making		
<p style="text-align: center;">Master &amp; Apprentice Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A one-week homestay with craftsmen in their village helped students to get familiar with strangers faster.</li> <li>• The different age group between craftsmen and students brought an advantage for both participants. Students want to learn craft, while craftsmen love telling their story.</li> <li>• Craftsmen took role as a craft master and students committed as an apprentice, missions to draw out craftsmen tacit knowledge and record them and to challenge craftsmen with new design by experimenting on new form, details and usages.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">User-Centered Design Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission to reinforce the use in bamboo products among villagers, young children in Bangchaocha were invited to join the interactive workshop.</li> <li>• By taking a role as users, young children together with design students joined fun activities to co-create bamboo products –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Breaking the ice game</li> <li>➢ What’s in the bag game</li> <li>➢ My family wickerwork story telling</li> <li>➢ My weekend diary</li> <li>➢ My wish-lists</li> <li>➢ Geometry &amp; block game</li> <li>➢ Color monster game</li> <li>➢ Paper model making</li> <li>➢ Bamboo product prototype making</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Designer &amp; Maker Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As an outsider, professional designers from different disciplines provided different viewpoints and solutions for both micro and macro level.</li> <li>• And with their professional background, the designers acted as a linkage between Bangchaocha craft groups and global market.</li> </ul>

Table 3. Community Strategic Plan and Capacity Building Workshop Activities

The first collaboration of master-apprentice model brought design students into the village for a week stay to learn basic techniques of bamboo basketry with local craftsmen. As an incentive for the craft groups, the co-creation was promised to generate a set of successful contemporary bamboo handbags for younger consumers as Bangchaocha groups wished to expand their target market.



Figure 3. Master-apprentice collaboration model, tacit knowledge transferred between craftsmen and design students.

The missions for design students were to rediscover the unique features as identity of Bangchaocha bamboo wickerwork, and to challenge their craft masters for experimenting with new bamboo product types and forms. In short, the villagers did not weave usual craft, but they together with design students built new and more challenging designs. The design outputs in the end were ranged from some new types of basket-handbags with a tint of urban contemporary look, a new nostalgia home-decorative products, a hybrid of traditional design with addition of contemporary functions.

The second collaboration was arranged in a user-center design approach by bringing in a group of local school children in Prathom 4 and 5 from Wat Yang Thong school. The local primary school in Bangchaocha has already provided their students with some basics bamboo basket weaving class. The intervention of design students had twofold purposes which are 1) to instill and reconfirm valuable local wisdom of Bangchaocha among local children and other villagers so that they would feel proud of their ancestor's heritage and 2) to bridge the gap occurring in school craft program since they only provide a typical bamboo handbag weaving exercise to the children and it seem un-match with children interest. Design students who come in once a week were assigned to facilitate these young enthusiastic friends for providing fun and exciting activities. So a series of short and fun games were introduced to the young children - a breaking the ice game, what's in the bag game, my family wickerwork story telling, my weekend diary, my wish list, geometry and block game, color monster game, paper model making, and finally making a bamboo product prototypes.



Figure 4. Design students and local children working together for their wish-list project.

The design outputs from this collaboration were fresh and innovative, varied from robot toys for boys and small bags for girls. Since the exercises provided local children the opportunities to imagine, create and build, based on what they had visualized, the output were very novel and touching. In the end, school teachers, local children, and also the local authorities all realized in their traditional cultural heritage and their young children potential.

The third collaboration was organized in a usual hop-in-and-out model of designer and maker model. Designers went into the village with their conceptual idea and negotiated with the local craftsmen for modifying the design to match with craftsmen skill and material availability. Most of the time, subsequently, local craftsmen needed to translate and adjust the design into finished works themselves. Sometimes the collaboration even failed because the miscommunication between designer and maker. The collaboration was adventurous for both the designers and the local craftsmen. Even though some of the design results were quite innovative and practical, but the collaboration itself has been seen as a short-term relationship and alienated to the villagers.



Figure 5. Designer-Maker model, designer self-study exercise and designer prepared her DIY natural dyed bamboo stripes ready for outsourcing the maker.

The design outputs from the three collaborations were comprised of four different product approaches - 1) products for generating income – compliance with needs of Bangchaocha's market expansion, outputs from design students collaborated and influenced by the craft groups, 2) products as indigenous crafts – a collection of new-traditional hybrid crafts for home decoration, outputs from design students collaborated with local craftsmen, 3) products for strengthening the community – products to be produced and consumed within the community, a bamboo rucksack for local school children, a small robot piggy banks for local children, outputs from design students and local school children workshop, and 4) products for enhancing bamboo weaving experience with Bangchaocha indigenous craft wisdom, outputs from professional designers. The product categories showed here indicate the possibilities of how bamboo wicker works can be developed and commercialized in modern market.

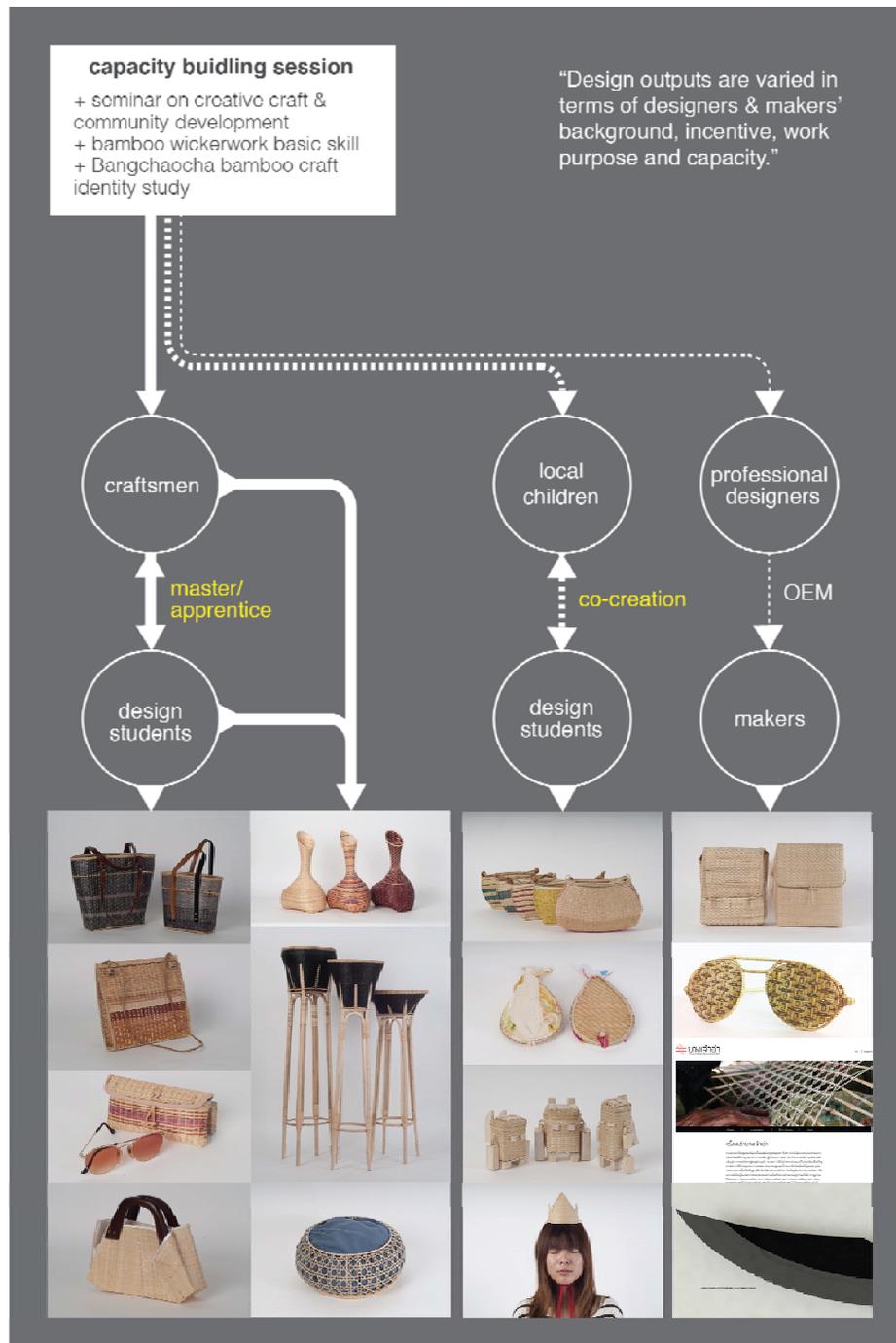


Figure 6. Outputs from three design collaborations.

**PHASE 3) IP PROMOTING ACTIVITIES**

Finally ‘Bangchaocha Bamboo Wickerwork’ collective mark was created to use as a community brand as a strategic marketing. This collective mark also operated to control quality of Bangchaocha weaving excellence and protect Bangchaocha rights for their unique and exclusive bamboo craftworks. In the

end, the trademark also helped maintain the community unity and promoted Bangchaocha cultural heritage.



Figure 7. Collective mark design registered and licensed for Bangchaocha Bamboo Wickerwork Community.

The project outcomes were then assessed in both economic and social-cultural dimensions. For the economic dimension assessment, a consumer survey and IP promoting event at Bangkok International Gift and Houseware Fair on October 16-19, 2012 was conducted to confirm the market feasibility of the new products, cost, along with its IP added value for future marketing plan. Purposely, the event was also a venue for coaching the locals to build their research capacity in gathering consumers' feedback for their next product development.



Figure 8. A gathering session for assessing the project output and outcome and local children exchanged their feedbacks during the gathering session.

Another evaluation session was also set up to evaluate the capacity building workshop outcome on its social and cultural aspect. The session was participated by craftsmen, local children and their teachers together with local authorities and craft product development experts from the Department of Industrial Promotion (DIP) and craft design business entrepreneur. Many villagers recognized the great potential and capability of their local children. From this perspective, we had learned that the process in making Bangchaocha's bamboo crafts established interconnectedness among family members and community residents. As a restatement, Bangchaocha families build ties implied

through the passing of indigenous knowledge from generation to generation. To preserve their craft tradition, the community must convince their younger generation that there is a future in bamboo basketry and that it is as a good way to make a living. Such inspiration-seeking activities and basic design process employed during collaboration workshop could be also integrated into provincial school curriculum in a form of fun and explorative exercise. The last aspect of this indigenous knowledge is the cultural aspect. We learned that it is necessary to balance one's choices between factory-line production and craftsmanship, the artistic-cultural value of handmade process as a contributing factor in making the crafts commercially successful.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1) IP and Communal Cultural Heritage Management**

As Prof. Gangjee, the IP law expert, stated that there are various cultural norms existed and associated not only with production practices but also with the oral traditions surrounding a local product. Bangchaocha community also possessed those myths and stories, both ancient tales and contemporary narrations. In most cases, the contemporary way of life and one's daily routine story can also be a unique narration behind object or product. These cultural daily practices can be functioned to signal demarcation between social groups and help integrate the product with social events and occasions. Under the protection and support of IP law and registration, GI and collective mark can be utilized to help consumer identify product specialties of each community, promoted a region's distinct identity, and prolonged local cultural heritage. With a good product narration, people and place of origin, these GI and trademark can subsequently feed into more general tourism promotion strategies, which showcase local heritage.

Even though there seem to be opportunities for Bangchaocha community, there are also challenges in this actual IP implementation, since there are agreements, rules, and code of practices, craft community members need to agree and comply for quality control and product trace-ability. These challenges required a very detail works and close collaboration between local actors, local IP experts and IP registration administrator from Department of Intellectual Property. Other challenge includes the consumers' perception - the tension between economical values vs. socio-cultural values on local cultural-related products - and public awareness raise about IP related products and its benefits.

The IP specialist, Mr. Fabrice Mattei stated that geographical indication law protects handicraft but does not promote the person who produced them. A promotion law for traditional crafts would be welcomed, similarly to the law of Japan. A unique nature of Japanese Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (1950) and its revision (1954) the government defined tangible and intangible cultural properties, and especially people as "living treasures" - all national resources and assets to be protected, appreciated, utilized and managed – not for commercial profit, but for the very survival of the civilization.<sup>9</sup> The long-term cultural heritage management program needed to carefully balance

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Kurin. (2004). Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003: UNESCO Convention: a critical appraisal, Blackwell Publishing, USA.

between (a) the people of their collective dimension, (b) the product of its specific quality and reputation, and (c) the place and the specific local resources. All three cultural heritage elements tie together, preserved and developed together. In conclusion, IP can help protect and support cultural heritage at one level but long-term and sincere government policy in managing and mobilizing national cultural heritage needed to be addressed systematically.

## **2) A Self-Sustain Collaborating Mechanisms Between Local Actors and Designers**

### **2.1 Retrieving Local Wisdom**

Cultural heritage is multi-dimensional assets and provides multi-levels to access. Scholars conventionally categorized them into tangible and intangible cultural heritage, sometimes seems inconvincible since the tangible physical artifacts usually endowed and tied to their intangible actions, processes, meanings, and intentions. When one tries to retrieve cultural heritage, one need to understand how the three cultural heritage elements of people, place, and product are linked to one another. Stories from local people of their collective attitudes and values in life, ways of life, actions and know-how processes in different daily routine activities, their interpretation of world-view from different ages and generations, link to their place of origin and specific local resource usage are the inseparable treasures. While product and its specific quality and reputation are a mere representation of the result of the thinking and actions mentioned above. All three cultural heritage elements can be accessed and utilized in different levels and required different sets of knowledge from public to appreciate and admire.

Traditional crafts create direct economic value to the community, and this is so vulnerable point that changes features and qualities of current contemporary crafts. Consumers with different background and experience expect different levels of cultural heritage products while craft producers need to juggle between making mass profitable craft and prestige craft for showcase. Therefore, the search and selection for indigenous authenticity and marketable applicable of cultural heritage is not easy and crucial. Last but not least, the appropriateness in selecting of one particular cultural heritage expression for utilizing in different medium and intention needed to study further in the future.

### **2.2 Mutual Benefits**

Thai society is based on mutual reliance and cooperation, which revenue and earnings had never been problematic as labor and outcomes were unmeasured. Nevertheless, the main goal of community members participating in this new creative economy is geared towards revenue and profit sharing. In order to achieve collaboration from the community, mutual benefits are considered to be a very important factor. Take the teachers at Wat Yang Thong primary school case for example, when the project first started, the school lacked enough teachers to run the class, and the project helped providing extra teachers to teach the children. Another example is the community needs for a new set of design since they sought to expand their product line for a wider target audience, and as a result, the project had helped with a new series of marketable designs. However, the mutual benefit needs to

be cautiously and sensitively handled. Especially when the community lacking social strength, conflicts can easily happen among the local members and with the outsiders.

### 2.3 A Self-Reliance Mechanism

A generation gap existed in the studied community, where the older generation carried on the task of weaving and keeping the community economy running while none of the younger generation seemed interested in prolonging this indigenous knowledge. The older people feared that their cultural heritage would become eventually extinct because of the younger generation's abandon their local craft industry which provided low economic returns and little career excitement. When the outsiders come in to the village and draw the attention on their local craft wisdom, the locals are more than happy and start to realize of their intrinsic cultural potential.

In the collaborative workshop, designers contributed their fresh perspective on specific local context, capturing the unseen indigenous craft know-how and local ways of life to develop new set of cultural craft products. Designers acted as a bonding agent between these two generations in the community, as the indigenous knowledge retriever from the older generation and as the inspirer for the local younger generation. Therefore, designers' role is not only to activate the new cycle of cultural-based design creation, but also to trigger local craftsmen and community in several ways. However, if an enthusiastic younger generation is ready and received well trained in preserving indigenous knowledge, there is no need for an outside designer to intervene at all. The outsider will only support community public relation and keep the closed-loop connection running.

Similar strategy has appeared with the case of 'Hub System' in Indonesia. A product designer, Joshua Simandjuntak has proposed the model of sustaining indigenous craft knowledge whilst embracing new design.<sup>10</sup> In craft villages in Indonesia, outside designers commonly come into the village with enthusiasm to produce their design with technical support of the local craftsmen. After their departure once the prototypes are made, there exists a 'vacuum' of a community's design inspiration. With such intermittent stimuli, it has resulted as an unsustainable progress among any stakeholders.

The 'Hub' is, therefore, created as the actual sharing place within the community where local craftsmen and visiting designers can share and exchange know-how and ideas on design utilizing indigenous crafts techniques. The knowledge acquiring facilities are equipped for craftsmen in order to search for knowledge from outside, while collaborative working space is provided for designers to learn the hands-on techniques from the craftsmen. The objectives of this system is to prompt the local craftsmen to regularly practice and share their indigenous crafts know-how through interaction with outsiders, and in return, the new and fresh design creations of these 'designers-in-residence' will trigger local design perspective and also be accumulatively archived. Even though the designers leave the community, the system and knowledge will remain to constantly drive the new cycle of learning.

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<sup>10</sup> Simandjuntak, Joshua. (2010) *The Crafts of Indonesia: The Implementation of Design in Wood Carving and Rattan Furniture Crafts*. Seminar: *Creativity and Self-Reliance Craft Development in Asia*, 9th June 2010, Thailand.

Furthermore, priority should be given to utilizing cultural heritage with local narration and inspiration, rather than market demand if one wants to develop the local commerce sustainably. The proper marketing channels can be sought once the new indigenous-based products are created. Knowledge transfer and accumulation are necessarily conducted in parallel with foreseeing and understanding potential markets.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, to run a community craft development in a more sustainable way need inputs from both the villagers and the connecting agent who can act as a stimulant and a linkage member between market and the locals. The communal cultural heritage has many layers and dimensions, and always unique to its people and place of origin. IP tools can help raising awareness in these products' uniqueness and originality, only that it will need a series of detailed works of production quality control to ensure its novel value. Thai communities and consumers are considered new to this IP product, therefore the public awareness raising activities should be provided as well as the clarification of IP-related product positioning should be studied further to help consumers to easily identify and understand the true value of these local heritage products.

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