

How “Canal Art” impacts the community and be used as a strategy for community planning along Bangmod Canal

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ABSTRACT

Art projects for community development are not widespread throughout Bangkok although a few examples do exist. “Art along the canal” or better known as “Canal Arts”, is an example of a public art project that exists but is rarely seen in Bangkok. This study is conducted to determine how “Canal Arts” may affect a community and to develop guidelines on its use in community planning. A quantitative survey along with Yamane’s method was used to evaluate three sites in Bangkok: Bukruk in Bangrak district, Hua Ta Kay in Ladkrabang district and Bangmod Canal in Thungkru district.

A large percentage of local inhabitants in these communities felt that art is beneficial in increasing community cohesion and in enriching the physical, social, economic and cultural elements in and around their community. Our findings indicate that their ratings were mostly “very much like” and “mostly like” art that existed in their community. Some respondents believe that the existence of public art may mitigate bad behavioral problems such as littering and even drug use whereas some has negative responses such as that art has no functions and that art looks untidy. More than 70% of the local inhabitants believe that art can impact a community in a positive manner by attracting people to the art, helping with the community/neighborhood beautification and making the community a cleaner and safer environment. It also encourages amongst children an interest in art.

Overall, public art is seen to impact the community in a positive way and “Canal Arts” can be used as one of the strategies to revitalize the areas around Bangkok’s canals.

KEYWORDS: Bangkok Canal, Canal Arts, Bangmod Canal, Community Planning

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangkok, is a city known for its waterscape. Situated on the banks of Chao Phraya River, Bangkok is

interwoven by canals. This water-based urban lifestyle and the meandering canals led to the city being dubbed as the “Venice of the East” by many foreigners. Over time, due to the manifestation of Western modernization in Bangkok, the lives of raft people in Bangkok have changed gradually. From the reign of King Rama IV, roads gradually became the new mode of transport. All these significant changes have turned Bangkok into a ‘land-based city’. “...The term ‘Venice of the East’ is not suitable to be used because this city is filled with roads and strong ‘brick’ buildings, in replacement of traditional rafts...” says Ernest Young, a British expatriate who served in the Ministry of Public Instruction during the reign of King Rama V¹. The local Thai way of living has undergone continuous changes through the passage of time. Some lifestyles such as life along the canal is quickly vanishing and is about to become a thing of the past. In the olden times, the Thais built their homes and communities along the waterways. Canal, big and small, were filled with incessant streams of paddling boats².

Bangkok is separated into 2 parts by the Chao Phraya River; Pranakorn (City site) and Thonburi. The Thonburi site was described as the historical, cultural, and agricultural area because it used to be the capital city in the past. The majority of official buildings and businesses were located in this area. One of the characteristics of Thonburi is the network of canals located in the area. From King Rama I to King Rama III, urban planning and design were made in consideration of the landscape of the river and canal. This led to many canal networks being constructed and designed to protect the city from potential enemies and to be the base for the city transportation network. At that point of time, houses and temples were built along the canal. Therefore, there are many interesting tales and stories to tell about how the people along the canal socialized and lived.

Bangmod canal³

The simple definition of a canal is a long narrow place that is filled with water and created by people so

¹ Chenimit, Sunya., 2010, Bangkok a City by the Water, Department of Drainage and Sewerage, Bangkok

² Plainoi, S., 2002, Thai Life Along the Canal, Kurusapa Press, Bangkok.

³ Vcharkarn.com. (2016). Bangmod orange farm: Past-Present-Future] .online] Available at: <http://www.vcharkarn.com/blog/38469> [Accessed 23 Oct. 2016].

that boats could pass through it or to supply fields, crops, etc., with water. Bangmod was the name of the sub-district located in Bangkhuntien district, Thonburi province in the past. There were many farmers using the Bangmod canal for transportation, to travel to places and to visit each other. In Rama III, the country started to trade agricultural products with other countries and Thonburi province was the main land for farming. The most famous product at that time was oranges which were largely produced in the Bangmod area. Therefore, this is why the Bangmod canal is able to connect to more than 40 canals in order to transport the goods to the market.

Background of 3C Project

3C stands for 3 words which are Cycling, Canal, and Community. 3C Project comprises of a group of various professional people who are interested in managing the social issues related to the canals. The full name of the 3C Project is “The Project for The Development of the Bike Routes along the Canal-side through Convenient Roaming and Sustainable Economy”. This project started in 2014 and has received funding from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation in 2016. What 3C has been done is more than 15 bike trips to the nearby communities and to survey to observe the canal networks and biodiversity along and around the canals. Plus, there are more than 10 different exhibitions of public art along the canal which are defined as “Canal Arts” – which is defined as various types of public art located along the canal. The aim of our 3C project is to connect the bike routes to our public transport system such as the mass transit trains (BTS/MRT) or public buses, by providing users with convenience and safety of use. Moreover, people who are living along the canal are able to have more opportunities for their revenues. As a further step, the 3C Project will be creating a campaign to educate new riders to be aware of the new routes for cycling and to revive the canal to be useable and clean.

2. MEDTHODOLOGY

Since the 3C Project team started working on art projects along the Bangmod Canal, their aim was to first beautify the area along the bike path. From the 3C Project's observation and interactions with the local inhabitants, there is some feedback from them. “Canal Art” has been mentioned in their everyday conversations about bringing changes in the community. It brings people from outside the community to visit and also encourages the local inhabitants to start to take a walk, spend time in the evening with their family to see all the artwork along bike path. That is why this study aims to describe how

“Canal Arts” impacts the community and to describe how “Canal Arts” can be used as part of a strategy for community planning by community leaders and district officers. The research methodology is divided into 2 parts; primary research and secondary research.

2.1 Primary Research

2.1.1 Quantitative research uses Yamane's formula to collection data with $\pm 10\%$ error in 3 sites which are Bang Rak (BUKRUK art festival), Hua Takay market, and Bangmod area. The sample sizes are described below in the table 1. All 3 sites are selected because there is some public art present in those communities. Wall Painting is the specific type of art selected to focus on and to study as it is the common of form of “art” in 3 sites. These will be compared in different views; preference of art, effect of art in both positive and negative way, how art can solve some problems in community, and other opinions from respondent.

Details	Site A Bang Rak (BUKRUK)	Site B Hua Ta Kay	Site C Bangmod
Population	2,992	859	4,317
Sample size ($\pm 10\%$ error)	90	97	98

Table 1: The sample sizes for each site

General information

Bang Rak (BUKRUK)

Bang Rak district is located in a tourist area in the urban area. In 2013, the first BUKRUK was organized with more than 30 international artists. BUKRUK II Urban arts festival is a 10-day project. The types of art present in the festival are wall paintings, art exhibitions, artist talks, animation, music, visual happenings, mapping projections, and workshops.

Hua Ta Kay

The community located near to College of Fine Arts and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang and in Lad Kra Bang district. The old market has an art and culture gallery and learning center, or better known as the “edutainment” center.

2.1.2 Qualitative research using discussion of mixed methods and mixed strategy research, in particular triangulation⁴ interview used to find common answers from 3 parties involving in the project. In order to get confirmation of art impact in project area. This form of research will be used in interviewing at Bangmod Canal selecting 10 representatives from 3 various groups: the community, the 3C Project Team, and the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDFI).

⁴ Bergman, M.M., 2008, Advances in Mixed Methods Research: Theories and Applications, SAGE, Los Angeles, Pages 22-34.

2.2 Secondary Research

There are 3 main issues for the literature review: community planning on art, art effects on the community, and the role of arts. These issues will be used to analyze and summarize the methods or processes to apply the idea of community planning. In addition, 2 case studies, namely the BUKRUK festival in Bang Rak and the Hua Ta Kay market are selected to be reviewed in order to compare them with the Bangmod area.

There are 5 topics of literature review as summarized below.

2.2.1 How Art impact Communities⁵

The grid further develops a typology proposed by Kevin McCarthy (2002) explaining that art has direct involvement with individuals and the community. For individual development, it is good in terms of improving one's health, psychological wellbeing, skills, creativity, and interpersonal skills. Art is beneficial for the community in terms of improving the economic, cultural, and social aspects.

2.2.2 Role of arts in Economic Development⁶

The 2012 National Governors Association (NGA) report, "New Engines of Growth: Five Roles for Arts, Culture and Design," outlines how the arts, culture, and design can compel economic solutions in five ways:

1. Create a fast-growth, dynamic industry cluster.
2. Help mature industries become more competitive.
3. Provide the critical ingredients for innovative places.
4. Catalyze community revitalization.
5. Deliver a better-prepared workforce.

2.2.3 Sense of community

The principle offered by Mcmillan and Chavis (1986) mentions 4 elements: Spirit, Trust, Trade, and Art. It is labeled as "Shared Emotional Connection on Time and Space" and represents the excellent values of the community. The basic of foundation of art is the experience and that community's members must have contact with one another. Contact is essential for the community to develop.

2.2.4 Idea of LQC⁷

Placemaking is an idea from Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte. Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization, to help people to create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. LQC stands for Lighter, Quicker, and Cheaper, making temporary and inexpensive ideas for a public space. It contributes to one's health, happiness, and wellbeing. The early implementation of LQC projects can help:

- Empowering vulnerable or overlooked communities
- Attract to investors, both public and private
- Establish (or re-establish) a neighborhood or sense of community
- Inform best practices for later planning efforts
- Encourage community buy-in, for example, how a new street design would impact traffic flows not only for cars, but also for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit
- Bring together diverse stakeholders in generating solutions and a collective vision
- Foster a community's sense of pride in, and ownership of, their public spaces

2.2.5 Case study: Kadeejeen Neighborhood, Bangkok⁸

These are culture-led urban regeneration strategies for community development inspired by UNESCO's concept of the Creative City 2004. Art is effective in stimulating community participation and promoting a sense of community value. Kadeejeen Art Festival was set up for 3 times during the period 2011-2012. All communities came to a decision to make the festival an annual event and the third festival had 39 participating partners – 29 from the voluntary sector, 6 from the private sector and 4 from the public sector. A model for inclusive cultural regeneration showed that art festivals were considered a major success amongst residents. Most respondents agreed that the event had improved the neighborhood's local image and identity, enhanced social unity, empowered residents and catalyzed new initiatives for neighborhood revitalization. The art festivals were an effective tool in renewing and strengthening relationships within and amongst the 6 communities of Kadeejeen.

⁵ Joshua Guetzkow, (2016). [online] Available at: <https://www.princeton.edu/~artspol/workpap/WP20%20-20%20Guetzkow.pdf> [Accessed 15 Oct. 2016].

⁶ Economic and Technology Policy Studies, (2016). [online] Available at: <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/062501ARTSDEV.pdf> [Accessed 19 Oct. 2016].

⁷ Project for Public Space, (2016)] .online] Available at: <https://www.pps.org> [Accessed 16 Nov. 2016].

⁸ Inclusive, Culture-led Urban Regeneration: A Case Study of the Kadeejeen Neighborhood, Bangkok, (2016). [online] Available at: http://www.cuurng.org/B_resource/B_data/articles/2556_02.PDF [Accessed 16 Nov. 2016].

3. ANALYSIS

The results of quantitative survey research are described in the following information.

Site						
Site A Bang Rak (BUKRUK)	28.9%	41.2%	19.6%	10.3%	0%	
Site B Hua Ta Kay	62.9%	25.8%	10.1%	1.1%	0%	
Site C Bangmod	71.4%	25.5%	2%	1%	0%	

Table 2: Favor of art in community

Results from the survey (as shown in Table 2) indicate that the respondents from all 3 sites rate “very much like” and “mostly like” the presence of art in the community. Notably, 41.2% of the respondents in Bang Rak have “mostly like” their rating whereas, the Hua Ta Kay and Bangmod community have the higher “very much like” as their rating. On the other hand, 10.3% of the community in Bang Rak has a poor rating for having art in their community whereas the other 2 sites Hua Ta Kay and Bangmod have much lower percentage of 1.1% and 1% respectively under the same column. Some of the reasons why the respondents are not in favour of art in their community are that *“art makes the surroundings look dirty and messy”*, *“art is not nice”*, *“simple wall is better”*. Of course, most of these answers are individual opinions which cannot be explained in theory. In addition, the Bang Rak site is located in the city, therefore most of people are living in small household with single family, unlike the other 2 sites that live in extended family. From the survey, 46% of the sample have lived in the Bang Rak community for more than 10 years; 21% between 5-10 years, and 33% less than 5 years. Thus, the survey results of Bang Rak are mixed between local people and new people who have just moved into the community. Since the art projects were created by artists from outside the community and most of respondents in the community had no participation in the artwork and had no idea how the artwork is conceptualized/developed. Therefore, they may not feel a sense of belonging for those artworks.

When asking about the benefits of art, the responses are relatively similar. There are 3 main reasons; improve economy (economical), beautify area (social), and attract people to visit (tourism).

Result	Site A Bang Rak (BUKRUK)	Site B Hua Ta Kay	Site C Bangmod
Art can solve problems	59.8%	52.2%	65.6%
Art Makes change	77.3%	87.8%	95.8%

Art effects in negative way	21.3%	7.8%	4.1%
Preference to have more arts in other community	76.3%	93.3%	94.9%

Table 3: Comparison

There are 4 issues compared in table 3. First is the issue on how art can solve problems in a community. Most of the problems mentioned in Bang Rak and Hua Ta Kay are related to trash and drug use. The results in Table 3 show that more than 50% believe that art can solve those problems. The respondents explained that issue in detail: the public is of the view that art could reduce drug usage because children will be able to develop an interest in art and culture due to the increase in exposure to art. In turn, it is likely that art will bring about education. In addition, the community will be encouraged to participate in art activities which will improve their wellbeing and cohesiveness. In terms of cleanliness: when using unused space to create art, it looks cleaner, reduces the amount of trash and can beautify the community. As a result, it could attract the press and media to publicise the story. Therefore, this will encourage the community members to start to take care of their own area. In Bangmod area, 65.6% believe that art can solve problems: trash and water or canal. Since art is likely to attract more people to visit, this encourages the district officer to collaborate with community by cleaning up the area containing the canal art, in order to make the community and canal cleaner. It also builds strong relationships amongst the community because they start to talk more to each other and inspire each other to think of ways and ideas on how they can develop their community more to improve local economy.

Secondly, more than 70% of the communities from all 3 sites believe that art makes change, especially in the Bangmod area. There are many reasons, explained as follows;

- More attraction and more visitors
- Community looks cleaner, nicer and increase in safety
- Encourages children to interest in art
- People know more about community
- More decoration and renovation
- Improve local economy
- Encourage people to keep clean

Thirdly, some respondents have negative views about art in their area, especially from the community in the Bang Rak area which caters for around 21.3% of the respondents as shown in the table 3. The negative views are as follow:

When there is an increase in the number of visitors to community for the art, there is insufficient car parking

which may then result in some conflicts. There are some paintings which were made with no permission and result in destroying the artwork on the wall. In the long run, there is also no provision for maintaining the artwork by any organization.

Meanwhile, Hua Ta Kay and Bangmod have a significantly low percentage of respondents who feel that art has negative effects on the community. Both communities mentioned the possible increase in trash due to an increase in number of visitors. And many were also concerned about the increase in crowds and noise in the community. Similar to the community in Bang Rak, the communities in Hua Ta Kay and Bangmod were also concerned about the maintenance of art and how to keep the art work clean and nice.

Lastly, the opinion regarding spreading the idea to make public art in other communities. More than 75% of all 3 sites prefer to have more art in other communities in Bangkok. As art can beautify the respective community, respondents from each site wish to visit other communities. This shows that the idea of art can be used as a tool to develop a community in terms of culture, economy and social manner.

When asked about how art can be used to develop the community, most of the answers concerned leadership and the unity of that community. It is necessary to educate the residents about art at the beginning for them to understand why they should have art in their community and the benefits of it. In Bangmod, they have confidence in the idea of using art to develop their community and that it can be used as a model for other communities in the future. The

respondents from the Hua Ta Kay community suggested that children are the main targets to work with art, since they can bring their parents to join. This will encourage to people to have more collaborations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From this study, art is one of the important tools which can be used to develop a community physically and also in terms of the positive benefits it may contribute to a community. Art creates a positive influence by encouraging people from both inside the community and also outside the community to know more about each other's communities, including the different cultures and values that each community may offer. Art also brings about sense of belonging and sense of pride to the community, for example; local people feel proud of their own community when visitors come and learn about the artwork and they start to have more conversations amongst themselves, unlike in the past. Art also inspires the community to keep their communities clean. Moreover, the communities believe that art can improve their local economy since it can attract tourists to visit their community. More than 75% of the respondent agreed that there should be more art in other communities. This signifies that art is needed in Bangkok. On the other hand, art projects cannot be carried out if there is no support from the country's leaders and community's member. To be further discussed, the impact of art depends on the type of art and it may have different results compared with this study.