

The Right to the City and Lost in Translation/Application? The Bangkok Case of Urban Public Park Redevelopment and Community Resistance

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Abstract:

This paper investigates on Lefebvre's concept of The Right to the City in relation to Bangkok's urban redevelopment projects. One of the main aims is to look at how The Right to the City has been translated and applied in the Thai urban planning. The paper draws on two case studies of urban park redevelopment projects which got the public attention over last few years. The first case is a small park redevelopment in the historic core of old Bangkok of Rattanakosin area, with over twenty five years of resistance by the existing community known as Pom Mahakan community. At present, with some small number of remaining community members who still occupying this public land, insisted to remain and stay there and resist any evacuation.

The other case is a rather macro scale of redevelopment of State Railway of Thailand's land known as Makkasan area, which formerly housed the warehouses and workshops. It is also Bangkok's largest green space and located right and the center and very close by to the well-known global commercial and shopping districts of Pratunaam and Ratchaprosong. There is still an on-going debate on what kind of redevelopment that this plot of land should be, with the contention between the shopping/commercial oriented and the public park and cultural oriented activities.

The discussion will be on how the idea of The Right to the City were translated, adopted, applied and what enable or restricted such realization? Also, it is interesting to discuss on what kind of community or post-community in contemporary urban society is like? What kind of participation, involvement and active citizen would be? And in the near future, how could it be ensure that in any development/redevelopment the benefit should be for all the city inhabitants/dwellers, especially the marginalized and vulnerable ones.