



International Forum funded by Chula Global Network
“Urban Green Space: Eco-socio-cultural Views”

December 17-18, 2015

Bang Kachao Green Area, Samut Prakan Province (Field visit)

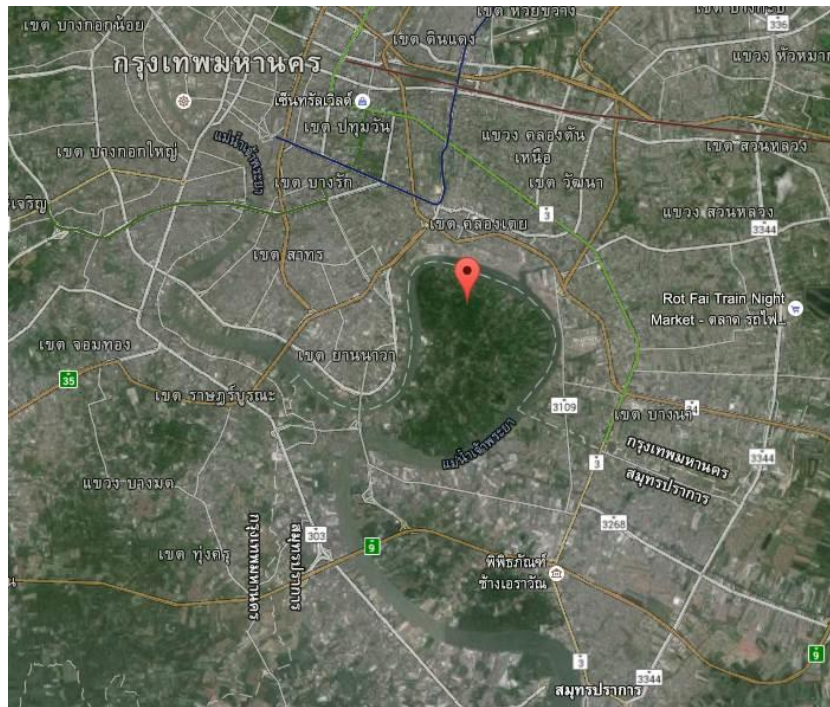
Jacques Amyot meeting room, 4th fl. Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University

Urban development planning needs to consider open area and green space, not only for the sake of environmental health but for the health of the community and for the sake of cultural ecology which is the basis of the community livelihood and identity. Bangkok metropolitan used to have several areas with green space that is called “rural and agricultural conservation area” in urban planning term. However, the areas have gradually been transformed into an undistinguished part of the metropolis.

At present, the large green area in Bangkok metropolitan that receives much attention is Bang Kachao. The area covers 6 Sub-districts in Phra Pradaeng District, Samut Prakan Province, and it has experienced relatively little change compare to other parts of the metropolis. This is due to the Cabinet Resolution of September 14, 1977 that declared the restriction on development and construction in Bang Kachao. Such restriction has been adjusted in recent years to allow certain construction like low-rise housing estate.

Local communities and several civic groups have moved to retain Bang Kachao natural green space, promote eco-friendly income generating activities, organize recreational bicycle routes, encourage nature-based learning activities, etc. Bang Kachao is thus an interesting case study about urban green space and nature-based solutions for urban quality of life and community identity. It will be fruitful to trace the conception of urban green idea to implementation and community participation in promoting the conservation of the area amidst the pressure of rapid urban growth.

This international forum started with a day-long field trip to Bang Kachao to talk to some community leaders and for a first-hand observation of visible pressure and change occurred in the area. Then the discussions on the second day started with three presentations on “Improving living conditions in cities with nature based solutions”, "Sustainable landscape management using ecosystem-based approach", and “Bang Kachao...The last urban green of Bangkok.”



The map of Bang Kachao Green Area. It is situated in the river bend and serves as the "lung" of Bangkok Metropolis.

Objectives:

- 1) To promote academic discussions and exchanges of ideas on urban green area with Bang Kachao as a case in point. The views expressed will be through urban planning, architecture, governance and administration, environmental sociology, etc.
- 2) To provide opportunity for actual site visit, talking to community leaders and members, and observing change in the urban green area prior to the discussions.
- 3) To promote continuous dialogues and loose network of academics and other interesting individuals who are concerned about urban pressure to green area and preserving urban ecology.

Participants:

The field visit to Bang Kachao was attended by 20 persons and the workshop was attended by 34 participants - lecturers, researchers, students from several universities and interested individuals, 6 of which are foreigners.

Summary of the study trip:

On December 17, 2015, international participants travelled by 2 vans to Bang Kachao green area. First stop was the house of Mr. Manat Ratsamithat, Member of Samutprakarn Provincial Council and leader of Heritage and Natural Conservation groups in the area. He introduced the history of agriculture and traditional lifestyle of Bang Kachao during the abundance era. The fertile land was the result of sedimentation from the river, and this wetland has the combination of 3 water

cycles -- fresh water, brackish water and salt water. At present, there are 67 villages in the area of 10,000 rai with the population of about 50,000, 30% of whom retain their agricultural lifestyle.

Five conservation group leaders were invited to give briefings about the current situations and their actions - water conservation group, waste management group, cycling group, fire flies conservation group and homestay group.



Visiting Mr. Manat Ratsamithat's house and talking to leaders of conservation groups

Most of these leaders are hopeful that Bang Kachao will develop in the right direction regarding tourism management, waste reduction, maintenance of urban ecology, etc. At present they are working on 5 main themes:

- 1) Limiting the numbers of garbage bins – instead of putting more effort on recycling and sorting garbage, villagers and visitors should reduce the amount of garbage by limiting the numbers of garbage bins in public areas.
- 2) Creating new generations who appreciate Bang Kachao environment and agricultural lifestyle. Developing and putting “learning about community forest” into the local school curriculum so that environmental awareness is incubated at an early age.
- 3) Developing proper rules and regulation on land use management and urban planning. Creating and promoting check and balance system for local administration and legal enforcement.

- 4) Promoting the status of areal administration to “special administration body” so that the 6 sub-districts can be managed as one entity and in integrative way.
- 5) Diversifying eco-tourism activities so that they become income-generating source for the local people while preserving the environment and cultural heritage; for example, weekend cycling, reforestation activity, etc.



Bang Nam Pheung Nok temple represents an older part of Bang Kachao and is filled with beautiful mural paintings.

In the afternoon, the participants went to visit places in Bang Kachao accompanied by conservation leaders. **Bang Nam Pheung Nok temple** represents an older part of the area with the history dated back 300 years. Old mural paintings and relics are being restored with the help of donation from several groups and organizations.



Group photo in one of the Parks in Bang Kachao.

There are several parks in Bang Kachao. Suan Pa Ket Nom Klao (Ket Nom Klao Forest Park) was a deserted area due to strict conservation in the beginning, after public participation was encouraged, several groups and businesses went in to support the maintenance of the Park and several conservation-based activities are organized occasionally.





Site visits to several “green” places around Bang Kachao.

During late afternoon, the participants dropped by Suan Sri Nakorn Khuen Khan which is a Park with well-managed landscape and waterscape. There is an exhibition hall with very good information about biodiversity in the Park. Representatives of "Big Trees", a civic group that has over 100,000 followers in their Facebook were invited to share their experiences and opinions about Bang Kachao. At present several universities, civic groups especially conservation ones perceived Bang Kachao as the area that needs protection and regulation

Summary of the forum:

After a welcome remark by CUSRI Director, Associate Professor Dr. Vithaya Kulsomboon, Dr. Narumon Arunotai briefly introduced the development of international forum on urban ecology which started as a small guest lecture in 2009 and went on as a workshop with field visit annually until today. This year saw some change in the program as it began with a field trip on the first day and followed by presentations and discussion on the second day.

The first presentation on “**Improving living conditions in cities with nature based solutions**” was by Dr. Jürgen Breuste. He gave examples of European landscape which saw transformation from agricultural area through the process of urbanization and suburbanization. Landscape is not entirely the result of planning, but economic pressure. However, the concept like urban gardening has now been realized in many cities throughout Europe. Germany has come up with “Urban Allotment Gardens” over 150 years ago. Not only is it for food production, but also for recreation, connection to nature, and promoting community spirit. Due to the present dis-linkage between nature and human, there are more attempt to revive this link through development of urban ecological stations and creating green connections and networks through green “spots and knots”. Green connection is important for biodiversity.

As for the case of Bang Kachao, Dr. Breuste commented that we cannot preserve it entirely, but we need to stabilize social community by having specific forms of land use/landscape and creating attraction to the city people to provide income for the local people so they can sustain their lifestyle and green area.



Dr. Jürgen Breuste gave a presentation “Improving living conditions in cities with nature based solutions



The second presentation is on "**Sustainable landscape management using ecosystem-based approach**: Case study of Bang Nam Pueng Sub District, Samutprakarn Province, Thailand" by Ms. Panta Yongnarongdetkul. Ms. Yongnarongdetkul described Bang Kachao area as relatively difficult to access, so some agricultural landscape has remained. In addition, it has certain identity, apart from being green area beside Bangkok metropolis there is also a Mon ethnic community.



Through economic inequality lenses, Bang Kachao is seen as agricultural area in decline while the opposite side of Chao Phraya River is filled with high-rises with full infrastructure and facilities and profitable land price hikes. As an urban fringe or suburban area, development pressure is rapidly increasing; however, Bang Kachao can remain as urban agriculture area with the support of national and local conservation groups.

The third presentation is on “**Bang Kachao...The last urban green of Bangkok**” by Associate Professor Dr. Suwattana Thadaniti. Dr. Thadaniti suggested the idea of DIY Green (Do It Yourself) or activities under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program to maintain agriculture area like Bang Kachao as nature learning center or garden allotment for city people. The “use” of the area by outsiders will make the area survive economically. One form of DIY is to create a contract between urban family and local agricultural family, not only will that fills in the gap between green producers and consumers, but it will forge a long-term interactions and relations between urbanites and local people. We can only support local conservation through stabilizing their livelihoods.

After the three presentations, CUSRI researchers and other participants reflected their experience about Bang Kachao urban green space, nature based solutions, livable cities and conservation/connectivity of green areas. There are five main issues that came up as follow:

- 1) The possibility of applying DIY green idea by creating agreement/contract and creating long-term relationship between urbanites and local agriculturalists or consumers and gardeners. It is also possible to arrange the renting of garden plots or allotment in Bang Kachao. The possible rate of rental fee and subsidies was also mentioned and suggestion came to about 10,000 baht per month. It is also possible to link with school gardening so children/students can earn income from school garden and nurseries (young plants, seedlings). These are brilliant ideas but the difficulty is how and where to start.
- 2) The group suggested that Bang Kachao forest parks should serve as places for regular nature learning and appreciation. Programs should be developed for local schools on outdoor biology/bioblitz. A model for co-learning or joint classroom between urban children and local children should be formulated.
- 3) In addition to income generating activities from tourism to support or stabilize local agricultural livelihoods, tourists should be made aware of their responsibility towards the conservation of local green area. There should be green funding from tourist fee or tax. Poor agricultural households should be subsidized through tourist fee or incentives should be provided for them to keep up their green landscape.
- 4) There are information gaps that need more research regarding Bang Kachao communities, e.g. social issues like poverty, non-registered residents, social ills like crime and gambling. Information and output from research should be presented back to the communities and advocacy platforms should also be organized as follow-ups.
- 5) Academic institutes should conduct policy studies, strategy and management of green area and urban national park, taking the issue of governance and participation as a key theme. The examples of Salzburg conservation effort and other EU protected areas could be highlighted and applied to fit Thailand context especially with the action of land



acquisition and reclamation. Comparative studies of urban green area challenges and management among countries should also be interesting.

After the open discussion, Dr. Bharat Dahiya made a synthesis and wrap up the forum. Presenters and participants were invited write papers to be compiled in a book on urban green and urban national park to be proposed to a publisher in the following year.



Annex A: Schedule

International Forum On “Urban Green Space: Eco-socio-cultural Views”

December 17, 2015 Field trip to Bang Kachao Area, Samut Prakan Province

Time	Activities
7.30 - 8.00	Meet at CUSRI
8.00 - 9.00	Travel to Bang Kachao by CUSRI van
9.00 - 12.30	Meet with conservation group for a brief overview of the area, and site visit to learn about urban ecology and management <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Public Park -- Sri Nakhon Khuan Khan Park 2) Local production/ households – Mushroom Farm, Joss Stick Production House and Bang Nam Pheung Area 3) Bangkok Tree House and other green businesses 4) Other interesting sites
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13.30 – 15.30	Discussions with local conservation group about the future of Bang Kachao
15.30 - 16.30	Return to Bangkok
16.30	Arrive at CUSRI

December 18, 2015 Jacques Amyot meeting room, 4th fl. Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University

Time	Activities
8.30 – 9.00	Registration
9.00 – 9.15	Welcome Remarks by CUSRI Director Associate Professor Dr. Vithaya Kulsomboon
9.15 – 9.30	Introduction to the forum by Dr. Narumon Arunotai
9.30 – 10.15	“Improving living conditions in cities with nature based solutions” by Dr. Jürgen Breuste , Urban and Landscape Ecology, IALE Centre for Landscape Research (CeLaRe) University Salzburg, Dept. Geography/Geology
10.15 – 10.45	"Sustainable landscape management using ecosystem-based approach: Case study of Bang Nam Pueng Sub District, Samutprakarn Province, Thailand" , by Ms. Panta Yongnarongdetkul , Master Degree Student In Environment, Development and Sustainability Program, Chulalongkorn University



Time	Activities
10.45 – 11.15	“Bang Kachao...The last urban green of Bangkok” by Associate Professor Dr. Suwattana Thadaniti, Senior Advisor to CUSRI and member of the Faculty of Architecture, Kasetsart University
11.15 – 12.30	Discussions about urban green space and nature based solutions for livable cities by participants
13.30 – 14.30	Some observations from CUSRI research units on Bang Kachao and urban green space
14.30 – 15.15	Discussion
15.15 – 15.45	Synthesis and wrap up by Dr. Bharat Dahiya
15.45 – 16.30	Participatory planning for next year’s workshop/forum (theme, topic, format, participants, etc.)

Annex B: Participants

1. Vithaya Kulsomboon	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
2. Jürgen Breuste	Salzburg University, Austria
3. Bharat Dahiya	CUSRI Visiting Professor
4. Suwattana Thadaniti	Chulalongkorn University and Kasetsart University
5. Narumon Arunotai	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
6. Wichaya Komin	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
7. Sayamol Charoenrat	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
8. Pakorn Lertsatienchai	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
9. Pichaya Surapolchai	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
10. Nuttapol Sothiratviroj	Panyapiwat Institute of Management
11. Paladej Na Pombejra	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
12. Kingkaew Buaphet	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
13. Usa Kotsripetch	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
14. Rewadee Chuckkasen	Urban Studies Cluster, Chulalongkorn University
15. Lamita Kedkan	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
16. Rutsamee Eksiri	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
17. Wassana Srijumpa	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
18. Wanida Kotchasarn	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
19. Sunisa Sukraksa	Walailuck University
20. Prapassorn Sriwichai	EDS, Chulalongkorn University
21. Rostam Yaman	EDS, Chulalongkorn University
22. Chieh-Ming Lai	Southeast Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University
23. Chanarat Yimchang	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute
24. Joanne Narksompong	EDS, Chulalongkorn University
25. Supot Chunhachoti-ananta	EDS, Chulalongkorn University
26. Christina Warning	Southeast Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University
27. Jakkapan Thruadmarakha	Thammasat University
28. Panya Parmkaew	Peace and Conflict Center, Chulalongkorn University
29. Panta Yongnarongdetkul	EDS, Chulalongkorn University



30. Aungkana Chindet
31. Kullanart Hongloi
32. Orawan Sukkasem
33. Apaporn Noumtanom
34. Chitlada Kijkamonthum

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