

Chapter 5

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestion

This research was probably the first attempt to experiment the new approach of city planning in a special urban area. It reviewed strengths and weakness of the contemporary urban planning theories and concepts, and reconstructed the new approach of hybrid urban planning. This approach was then experimented at Wat ket area, Chiangmai City. The focus of this study were to firstly, test the core elements of the approach and evaluate its results as well as acceptance of the key stakeholders. Secondly, it intended to investigate the process of Hybrid Urban Planning, especially the flexible and adaptable methods and strategies conducted by the collaborative mechanism. This chapter contains three parts that include result conclusion, discussion and suggestion as follows.

5.1 Results of the Hybrid Urban Planning

Hybrid Urban Planning concept was applied at Wat ket area by integrating urban design and urbanization concepts. It began by the collaboration team to follow the common vision ‘The Only Living Lanna in the City’ that derived from common crisis and community demand to design and specify land use development of their own land in order to be the main direction for operating all activities. Several meetings and additional information were organized in order to improve Chareonrat Road and public area on the Ping Riverside, through specific plan. The adaptive and flexible process were employed as follows.

1) Collaborative team comprising academician and young leaders of Wat ket collected necessary secondary and primary data and information. In brief, information needed for urban design, such as, physical, land use, information, facilities, housing, transportation, ecology, demography and economy of the designated area were collected with cooperation from offices that are part of the collaboration mechanism. Information

about urbanization that needed for integration under Hybrid Urban Planning were collected not only from office but also from leaders conducted several survey and meeting. They comprised for example, history about settlement and land use, dynamic land holding, dynamic demography, culture, social and economic change, problems and needs of area.

2) All information collected were analyzed using holistic causal relationship, resulting in certain for livable area. First conceptual design was formulated. It included detailed design for improvement of the two designated areas. For Chareonrat Road the proposed plan covers, HDD activity, adding footpath and bike lanes, renovating posts and signs as well as historic building. For Ping Riverside, the plan include renovation of “Gateway” to the living museum of Wat ket, walkway and bike lane, recreation and sport center, land marks of timber industries and historic bridge, decorating landscape with tree and grass, All of which were to make the place as a part of living museum in tangible and the common vision of the “only living Lanna in the city” in abstractive terms. In addition team members and key stakeholders unanimously accepted the results of the conceptual design. Which latter on was used to produce the final design.

3) The conceptual design was presented for feedback and contribution from five groups of thirty stakeholders, including government sectors, leaders of four religions, Wat ket community leaders, opinion leaders and entrepreneurs of Ping Riverside business.

4) The conceptual design was later corrected following the requirement and suggestion of five stakeholder groups leading to the final design of collaborative project on specific plan for Wat ket sustainable development.

5.2 Implications of the Hybrid Urban Planning process

As mentioned earlier, the hybrid urban planning was tested at Wat ket area for development of the specific plan in order support the common vision of making the place as living museum. Since the concept is a challenge to the mainstream concepts of urban planning, the process being employed by the collaborative team is as equally important as the results of the well accepted specific plan. The process was quite flexible and adaptive to the issues as well as the people involved. The followings are the

substantive summary of how the concept was transformed into practice and how it was adjusted itself to accommodate obstacles as well as take steps further when it gained valuable feedback and acceptance. All of which is the hope for implications of the process being replicated and adapted elsewhere in the future.

1. One of the most difficult factors leading to success or failure of the action from the beginning to the end is the collaborative endeavor from team members. It would be unrealistic to presume that members from different backgrounds, statuses and being insider and outsider work together with mutual interests, perception and expectation. The process encountered this reality from the very beginnings. It found that the mere meetings nor the more informal and cultural group conversation through community forums helped but did not bring about true collaboration. The adaptation was made by adding the following elements. The first was focus on the common vision. The common vision was formulated before the collaboration team was organized, but it was repeatedly refined and redefined among members and stakeholders which resulted in better understandings and narrowing the expectation gaps. Secondly, the concept of hybrid urban planning is quite complex, holistic as well as requiring social and cultural involvement. It is neither realistic that members would comprehend it from the beginning. The process suffered from this reality, and latter turned back to basic that was to focus from simple and tangible expected results first. As the process continued and more several expected results visualized more collaboration grew accordingly. Thirdly, the use of division of labor among team members to collect necessary information and adhere to evidences rather than emotion nor wrong conclusion without evidences gradually changed the perspectives of members of the team when dealing with personal conflict. Finally, it found that any plan or action derived from the process of making the specific plan by application of the hybrid urban planning, more or less were perceived by almost all members and stakeholders a win-win situation. This eventually created less conflict neither from misunderstandings nor from wrong visualization that someone would totally lose. These are the substantive parts of the flexible and adaptive process of the hybrid urban planning that may have some implication to other urban spaces where the context is relatively similar.

2. Another difficulty implementing the new approach of hybrid urban planning is data collection and analysis for comprehensive and detailed specific plan formulation.

Less but still being obstacle in this regard was data and information about the urban design domains. Secondary information available were aggregate at such macro level as provincial and regional units. Specific planning requires information at the more micro level pertaining to local units. This obstacle was solved by using the macro data as the background and adding primary information from survey and direct observation. Collection of primary data could be appropriately designed and assigned to team members from Wat ket area to collect. This effort worked quite well since it covered a small area coverage that the comprehensive urban planning could not do, and because the team members, when understood and agreed with the expected results they perceived that everything they did was for them. However the more problematic was collection and analysis of data and information about the urbanization domains. This approach was presumably the first attempt to integrate people and community aspects into urban planning from the beginning of the process. The biggest obstacle was how to define the domains and their related sub-domains and how to flexibly collect information that could most capture urban problems caused by human and vis versa. It was the use of mixed method reviewing secondary data including history and cultural heritage from written sources, organizing several formal and informal community forums as well as conducting face-to-face discussing with key stakeholders in order to receive feedbacks, criticisms, and suggestions according to the conceptual design presented to them. The results of information about urbanization domains were not perfect but sufficient for analysis.

3. One of the challenges in urban planning is how to analyze all collected data and information in such a way that (a) planners as individuals or as a collaborative team are able to understand the holistic causal relations among variables from both urban design and urbanization, (b) select the appropriate analytical method of inter and intra relationship among variables and (c) derive the results of the analysis into the first draft of the conceptual design with substantive details (please refer to the analysis and its results in Chapter 4), All of this was more comprehensive than the use of other conventional methods like SWOT analysis or system modeling.

4. The most crucial aspect of urban planning is not how well the planners design, but rather how the plan is well accepted first by residences, and latter by all concerned stakeholders. The conventional public hearing is necessary but insufficient to

achieve this goal. The process of hybrid urban planning as presented in Chapter 4 and concluded above appears to obtain the balance between good design and people acceptance. All this is because it involved local communities from the beginning and throughout the process. The collaborative team comprising academic and local leaders who worked on every step and opinion leaders coupled with provincial and local governances who supported and contributed as required was the key factor for this balance.

5.3 Theoretical discussions

From literature review in Chapter 2, it is evident that the contemporary urban planning, especially the new urbanism approach, attempts to cope with urban problems as well as to accommodate future aspects of cities being new technology, environmental concerns, and new city culture. This has been logically sound and is likely to produce promising results. However, it is arguable that, firstly, in an urban area where the problems are very complex, having unique cultural and historical identities, and its people livelihood has undergone rapid changes, the contemporary planning approach may not be sufficient to bring about sustainable city. Secondly, regardless of urban planning approach, especially the case in developing countries like Thailand, the planning process dominated by the professional city planners using top down approach may results in implement and enforcement problems, because of lack of people involvement.

The hybrid urban planning approach, therefore, is an attempt to fill the gap as mentioned above. Logically, only integration of the concepts and methods of new urbanism with those of urbanization's and collaboration of professional planners and local people with flexible and adaptive process may help making the place more sustainable in holistic aspects. Practically, to be realistic, this approach posits an important scope conditions as follows. Firstly, it has a potential to work in a small urban area within the city or metropolitan. Secondly, that urban area has complex problems and or uniques cultural and historical identities. Finally, that area maintains a certain degree of communityness where its leaders and groups are more or less strong and determined to solve their problems.

The hybrid urban planning to be successful does not only have to operate according to the above mentioned scope conditions, but also adhere to the following guiding principles. Firstly, there must be the collaborative teams directly or indirectly involving with stakeholders from the area as well as the concerned government offices and private sectors. Secondly, the area, through the initial to the end of the process, must have the mutually agreed common vision that is used as the main guideline and creation of the collective efforts. And finally, it needs the flexible and adaptive process of data collection and analysis in order to formulate the conceptual design, and latter, the final design with detailed requirements and commitment after obtaining acceptance and feedbacks from all stakeholders. It is eventually the balance between bottom up and top down strategies. An experiment at Wat ket area as the specific plan to support the living museum and as partial fulfillment of the common vision of making the place the only living Lanna in Chiangmai city presented in Chapter 4, has proved that the hybrid urban planning is one of the promising urban planning approaches.

5.4 Future research and policy implication

This study is rather a pilot project on experimenting the hybrid urban planning to formulate the specific plan at one urban area having met scope conditions. Beside a certain degree of success, the study has found out two substantive determinants that need further investigation in order that this new approach can make more contribution to the field of urban planning as well as resulting in a real implementation towards sustainable city. The first one addresses the issue about detailed logic and methodology of urban design and urbanization integration. The hybrid urban planning requires academic specialty characterized by the multidisciplinary fields with urban planning and social sciences as the core. It is the field that understands elements and factors affecting urban phenomena holistically. It requires methodology that capture urban design and urbanization domains and an ability to analyze informations systematically in order to be a foundation for specific plan design. Therefore planners with this qualification is very necessary. The big challenge for further investigation is how to add on this qualification to new or existing planners or researchers and install into the process.

Another determinant involves social aspects of the city planning and mobilizing. This study conceptualizes the urban hybrid planning with social aspects as one of the implicit foundations. In particular, inclusion of area-based collaboration concept, especially having the collaborative team as planning and mobilizing mechanism for specific plan and beyond is evident and appear very promising. However, owing to such limitations as time and resources of this study to fully implement and investigate substantive results, it becomes necessary to further follow the ongoing process where local leaders who are part of the mechanism to manage socially, economically and politically. Next study should address the research question of how and in what conditions leaders and their organization can not only collaboratively plan their urban area, but also continuously are able to manage and mobilize their specific plan. If we understand deeper into this social aspect of urban management in addition to the existing system and governance, making urban space more sustainable will be more realized.

In terms of policy, it is conceivable that the urban planning agencies from central provincial and local governance are looking forward to the end results of making city livable especially the healthy livelihoods of its residences. They can materialize this goal beginning with replicate and adapt all endeavors of this study to places having the three scope conditions. An immediate operation is organizing collaborative mechanism by selecting and supporting academic team with the above mentions qualifications and incorporate the local leaders. Then the role of planners as part of the collaborative mechanism will be social mobilizer and coordinators in addition to exercising their city planning expertise. When the hybrid urban planning process is mobilized the results of sustainable city will be more or less evident.