TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S): AN INTERPLAY OF DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The Poetics of Spatial Representations for (In)Tangible Cultural Heritage: Case Studies from Sarachit Community, Si Satchanalai, Thailand

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present in person (with/without a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):
Not only had contemporary architectural discourse called for reconsiderations of a dichotomy between “tangible” and “intangible” cultural heritages, but also for revisions of those terms. Informed by the said scholarly developments, this research presented a multi-dimensional investigation on a collection of human-made and naturally-created environments in Sarachit sub-district, which were valued by the local inhabitants as their shared inheritances. Located in Si Satchanalai district of Sukhothai province, Sarachit stood next to Si Satchanalai Historical Park, which was a part of the Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns that constituted one of UNESCO World Heritage sites in Thailand. Operating on a theoretical premise that spatiality and
heritages were generated from material-social relations thus subjectively becoming contingents on perceptions of, as much as interactions with, mental and physical cognizance, the studies consisted of the following thematic foci. First, the inquiries examined how intangible heritages—namely indigenous legends, verbal folklores, spiritual beliefs, and cosmological views—served as a definitive shape and force in cultivating a common identity among the populace through representations of space and significations of traditional artefacts in social practices and customs. Second, the enquiries incorporated maps and diagrams to illustrate the ways in which tangible cultural heritages—notably toponymy and religious texts—fostered a sense of place and belonging via spatial-cum-temporal narratives, linking several locales in the sub-district to archeological ruins in the historical park. Third, the upcoming analytical and critical discussions further revealed that similar to space, which was neither already produced nor ready to be occupied, cultural heritages in Sarachit, were social constructs that existed in a state of constant changes. These findings provided an argumentative basis to conclude that cultural heritages, both tangible and intangible ones, were in fact made and used before they were interpreted and conceptualized as such.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Koompong Noobanjong currently serves as an associate professor of architecture at KMITL. He won a scholarship from the Royal Thai Government to pursue his M.Arch. and Ph.D. in Design and Planning (Architectural History, Theory, and Criticism) at the University of Colorado, U.S.A. In addition to books and book chapters on the politics of representations in architecture and urban space, Koompong has published several research articles on critical studies of the built environment and global cities. He has also lectured on these topics at a number of academic forums overseas. His seminal book, The Aesthetics of Power: Architecture, Modernity, and Identity from Siam to Thailand, was released in 2013.

Surasak Kangkhao is an associate professor of architectural education at KMITL. He earned both his B.Arch and M.Arch degrees from the University of Philippines, Diliman. His scholarly interests range from architecture and culture, urban and rural planning, creative economy, design pedagogy, to vernacular arts and crafts. At present, Surasak is directing a series of multi-disciplinary researches on strategic models for creative tourism in the historical town of Si Satchanalai and the adjacent UNESCO World Heritage Site. Apart from his academic career, he is a licensed architect with extensive experiences in professional practice.