
Community-led learning space towards city conservation on a case study of Muensan community, Chiang Mai Thailand

1.Chiranthanin Kitika,

Full time lecturer, Faculty of Architecture Chiang Mai University Thailand

Chiranthanin.kitika@cmu.ac.th

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5881-4566>

2.Umpiga Shummadtayar,

Chiang Mai University Thailand

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0109-7364>

3.Supitcha panya

Chiang Mai University Thailand

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6391-1512>

4.Nobuo Mishima

Saga University

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9334-3058>

5.Sant Suwatharapinun

Chiang Mai University Thailand

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1148-9871>

6.Narut Charoensi

Chiang Mai University Thailand

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5354-9617>

Abstract.

In Many developing countries, Heritage city was developed rapidly to push tourism economy without creating cultural assets into city preservation beforehand. Following sustainable development goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities, city preservation needs to be reconsidered inclusively with community leading. There is not only protecting heritage assets by authorities. but also involving local residents in all stages of planning. Local community needs to take an action to sustain city preservation by defining and maintaining their ways of life on historical and cultural assets as new learning space for the city. In Chiang Mai, Thailand, Old city has not certainly focused on sustainable community, Muensan community is one of Silverware craftsman village in town since 1796. Presently this village has no preservation area and also is promoted for cultural tourism but only business owners have gained profit. By bar, this comment now set up community committee foe working on cultural tourism. Locals who carry on silverware craftsmanship and also cultural services. They need to be empowered and elevate their local wisdom towards learning space. The village needs to sustain their living and local businesses here belongs to their own cultural assets. From case study on Learning space & Community-led revitalization from Hizenhama village, Saga prefecture in Japan, Researcher integrated 6 methods.to create "Community-led learning space" which contains with; Community engagement, Co-design, Spatial & educational design, Implementation, Evaluation and, Ownership. In creating conservation area, local communities are engaged to Stakeholders who keep their own heritage - cultural assets. To drive preservation area in 21st century, it is to encourage learning lesson into preserved area, instead of freezing old building in time. The value of learning space will encourage uses that benefit both local and visitor not just tourism purpose.

Research output is to create community-led learning space, it is to pass forward new mechanism on city preservation as a valuable resource. This learning space is for engaging community network in environmental education on unique skill & knowledge. This space can be tailored to diverse groups inclusively; aging society, marginal people, and international group. Finally the network of community-led learning space is to push neighborhood economy sustainably instead of tourism economy.

Key words: Community-led learning space, City conservation, Collaborative creation, Neighbourhood economy, Heritage City

1. Introduction

To involve local community into urban conservation in the heritage city is challenging to sustainable development goal 11: sustainable city and community. Heritage city could not protect only historical buildings tangibly but also maintains social environment to support and take an action for preservation. Chiang Mai is northern regional city of Thailand where established since 1296 as Lanna kingdom. With historical environment and unique culture, This city aims to be recognized as UNESCO Heritage city in 2026 and has pushed domestic economy with Cultural tourism (ICOMOS Thailand, 2013). Wualai district located in the southern part of Chiang Mai city, has long been known as a center for the art of silver craftsmanship. The area began to develop around the 15th century as part of the Lanna Kingdom, and over time, many skilled artisans gathered and settled here. In particular, the techniques of silver crafting have been passed down through generations, and even today, Wualai remains highly regarded both in Thailand and internationally for its exquisite silverwork. Visitors to the local temples and markets can purchase beautifully crafted silver decorations and handicrafts known as "silverware and silversmith art". Every year, the Silver Craft Festival on Wualai Road draws large numbers of tourists to the area, making it a highlight event that showcases the community's heritage. Wualai is not only a symbol of Chiang Mai's rich culture and traditions but also a place where local history and craftsmanship continue to thrive, preserved by the hands of the community (Chinawat, S., 2024).

Geography in Muensan community has changed following with historical overview, it contains to 4 periods; 1. The Lanna Kingdom Era – Muensan area flourished as an southern lowland part between inner and outer city walls, which spanned from the 13th to the 16th century. During this period, the area became a center of culture and religion with many temples, pond and fields being built. 2. The Community & Trade Hub Era – After city revival in 1796, King Kawila relocated various ethnic groups from outside the city to strengthen and sustain Chiang Mai's growth. this movement led to the formation of 3 main sub-communities within the Wualai district: Muensan, Sriphan, and Nantaramb. Wualai district was strategic geographical location where also known as a major trade hubs in Chiang Mai gate. Merchants from surrounding regions came here to exchange goods and culture, especially Silverware craftsman settled down in this area, where became a lively hub of Craftsman communities. 3. The Modernization Era – From 1964, Wualai district has pushed for economic district then the new street, infrastructure and land management are taken over the district. Muensan village became business zone between Oldcity and airport. There was modern shophouse along the main street and still appeared local residents who keep on working as Silverware craftsmen inside small alleys. (Shummadtayar, U., Hokao, K., & Iamtraku, P., 2012) 4. Tourism Era – Since 2004, Muensan has grown into a popular tourist destination with Saturday free market. Wualai district now is playing an important role in boosting the neighborhood economy. (Chinawat, S, 2024) Especially muen san community where Local have preserved and passed down Silverware works from older generation to generation. (Fig. 1).

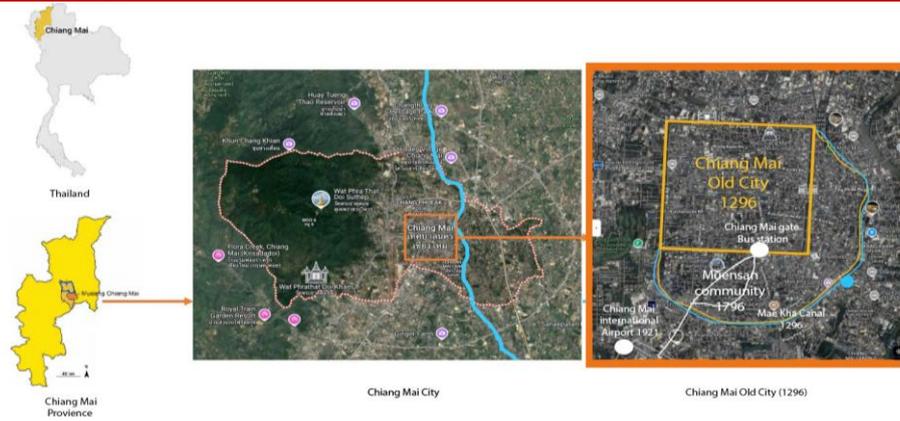


Fig. 1. Location of Muensan community and comparison commercial and local residential area on maps

2. Research materials and methods

This research method refers to Community-Led Revitalization from case studies of Hizenhama community, and Learning space methodology. Hizenhama community located in Kashima City, Saga Prefecture, it is a historic district renowned for its sake brewing heritage and traditional architecture. The area, particularly the 600 meter-long Sakagura-dori where Sake breweries located in Sakagura street, earning it designation as an Important Edo period's Preservation district for Groups of Traditional Buildings. (Okazaki, Y., Mori, S., Wakuya, H., Mishima, N., Hayashida, Y., & Min, B.W., 2016). This community was promoted as tourism village since urban development with railway 1930. Without historical & cultural assets' preservation, old buildings had left. Besides, this village became a passing by area since road development constructed as National route no.207 in 1953.

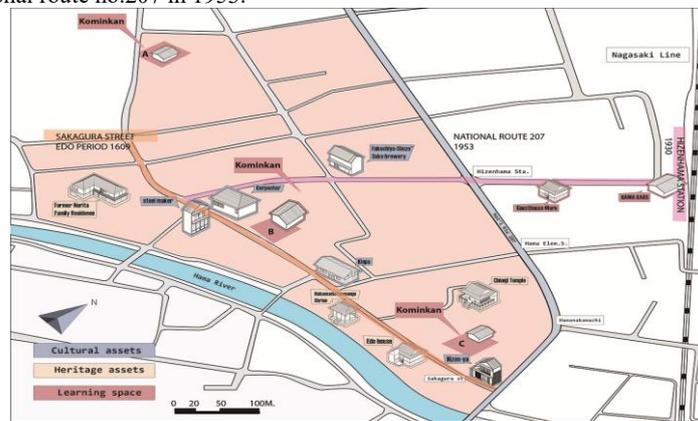


Fig. 2. An analysis on Cultural mapping in Hizenhama community Japan on October, 2024

In Hizenhama village, there have set up their learning space as known as Kominkan (公民館) where local government and community committee discuss and select community space to provide learning activities with any community network such as elderly people, women club or children in village, and craftsmen. Kominkan is public building where provides learning environment and takes care by local government since 1945. Later on, Community-Led Revitalization as known as Machizukuri, it is preservation and revitalization of Hizenhama community which exemplify on community-driven urban planning. This process emphasizes local participation in maintaining cultural heritage and fostering sustainable development. Hizenhama community stands as a testament to the successful integration of cultural preservation and community-led development since 1990 (Okazaki, Y., Mori, S., Wakuya, H., Mishima, N., Hayashida, Y., & Min, B.W., 2016). Community has networked and raised community conservation with collaboration between Saga University & Kashima city in 1996. Later, this community recognized a role model of Machizukuri village in 2003. Summary in Practice from Hizenhama community contains 3 steps;

- **Engagement** – To set community network between local residents and business owners through events and storytelling. Hizenhama set up NGO as key actor.
- **Enrichment** – To set cultural value by revitalizing historic buildings and celebrating cultural assets on the maps.
- **Enhancement** – To integrate urban conservation into community life and push forward lifelong learning for long-term sustainability. There appears where comprehensive learning from schools & community can be involved and support to community product & services (Fig. 2).

In 21st century, a learning space in a community is any environment where people come together to share knowledge, skills, stories, and experiences. It's not mainly about education in the traditional sense, it's intentionally about mutual growth, dialogue, and people empowerment. Methods of learning space making, it combines participatory design, spatial planning, and educational theory (Tawil, S. & Locatelli, R., 2015) which combines with 6 steps;

- **Community Engagement and Needs Assessment** - it is to understand the learning needs, aspirations, and cultural context of the local community. Research tool: Surveys, interviews, and focus groups with residents, Participatory workshops and storytelling sessions
- **Co-Design and Participatory Planning** - it is to ensure the space reflects local identity and supports shared goals. Research Methods: Use of models, sketches, or digital tools to visualize ideas, Collaborative prototyping (mock-up learning corners or installations)
- **Spatial and Educational Design Principles** - it is to Integrate pedagogical strategies into physical space.
- **Implementation** - it is to bring the learning space to life with real programming. Methods: pop-up events, workshops, or exhibitions including partnerships with schools, NGOs, artists, and elders
- **Evaluation** - it is to continuously improve the space based on use and feedback. Research methods: Observation and Feedback surveys from participants
- **Ownership** - it is to ensure long-term use, maintenance, and relevance such as Local fundraising or income-generating activities or, skill-sharing programs to maintain and adapt the space over time]

Theoretical Framework: A Community-led learning space is a propose of placemaking where illustrates the interrelatedness on urban imageability. It hypothesizes that participatory placemaking promotes a healthier social life, better environment and also economy which collectively support

local tourism and community sustainability. (Tawil, S. & Locatelli, R., 2015) Following integrative method, this process will give 3 outcomes: Cultural asset mapping from community engage, Comprehensive learning lessons from co-design and participational planning, and finally Community-led learning space which continue to discuss more following Implementation, evaluation and ownership (Fig. 3).

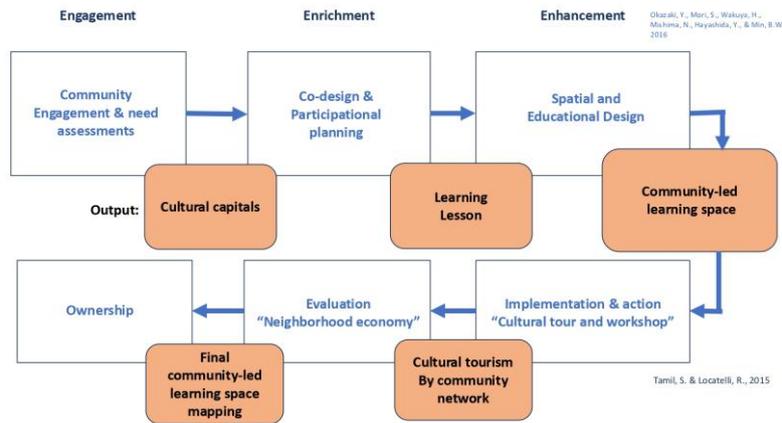


Fig. 3. Method of Community-led learning space – diagram

3. Research results

3.1. Community engagement towards crating A Community Network

A community network refers to the voluntary association of individuals within a community who share a common goal of developing their own community. This includes efforts in cultural preservation, the transmission of local wisdom, and grassroots economic development. (Hrehorowicz-Gaber, H., 2013) It also involves the exchange of information and experiences, as well as collaboration in community activities across economic, social, and cultural dimensions. (Damurski, L., Pluta, J., Maier, K., & Andersen, H.T., 2019) From surveying and focus group discussion, they set their own need statement which is to preserve community and create their own cultural tourism. we built up an action team called as “Muensan Wualai”. This team is new unit from community committee, take action for cultural event, and connects with university and also local business owners.

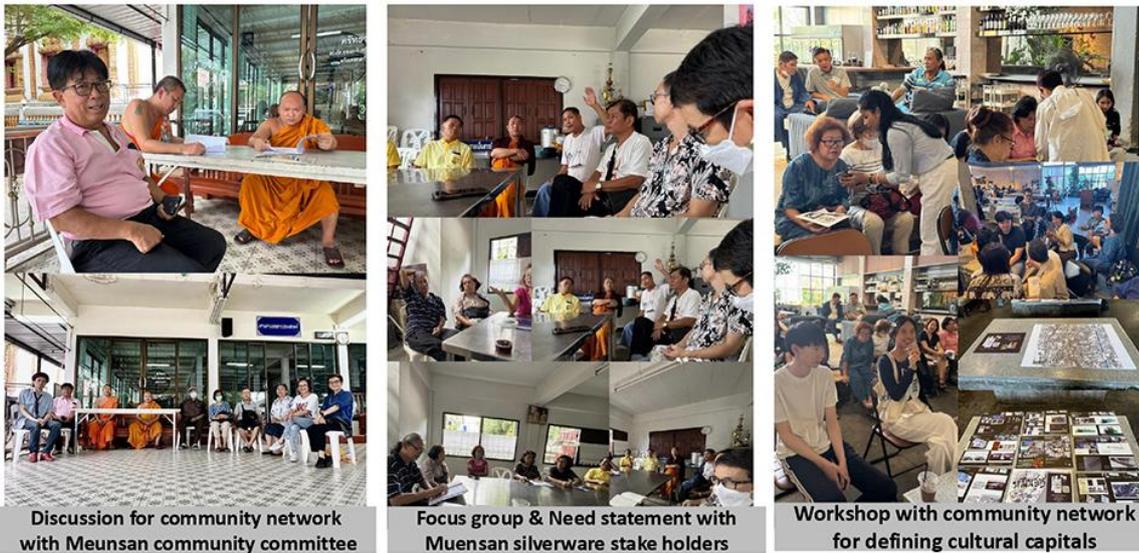


Fig. 4. Process of community engagement includes Discussion, Focus group and Workshop

Cultural asset workshop in the Community

This workshop engages community members, residents, and business owners to involve identifying assets of cultural value. These assets can be both tangible and intangible, such as local culture, traditional knowledge, local products, architecture, and other forms of cultural asset. By far, they sheard memories through kinship and neighborhood. Most of storytelling happens in their own houses and Muensan temple.



Fig. 5. Surveying & collecting cultural assets in Muensan community

From workshop summary, there reclaims cultural asset as Characteristics of Traditional Wooden Houses in Muensan community. Traditional wooden houses in Muensan community reflect a deep integration with the region’s climate, lifestyle, and cultural values. Cultural characteristics which local community discussed and posits their cultural asset following on King Kawila period. Muensan village settled down and started Silverware craftsmanship as Wualai district. Presently, Local houses have never been recognized as Heritage and also, community needs to gain more power on sense of belonging. Research surveyed and collected old wooden house with community committee (Fig. 5). Local wooden house where carries on Silverware and traditional culture, is selected and analyzed as common key architectural element (Fig. 6). 5 elements that local believes that Muensan village character since 1796 are containing with;



Fig. 6. 12 Muensan Traditional houses and building which is selected by community network as Cultural asset.

- Wood Materials & Structure:** Teak and other durable hardwoods are commonly used due to their strength and aesthetic appeal. These materials are well-suited to the local environment and are typically worked using traditional construction techniques passed down through generations.
- Raised Floor Structure:** These houses are elevated on stilts to protect against humidity, flooding, and pests. The raised floor also facilitates better air circulation underneath the house, contributing to natural cooling and a comfortable living environment such as silverware working space and also traditional event.
- Gabled & Manila Roof:** The steeply pitched roofs are designed to efficiently shed heavy rainfall. Natural materials such as thatch or clay tiles are commonly used, enhancing both insulation and ecological harmony.
- Originally Compound houses:** Old village gathers house with kinship, compound houses are located as one family then their houses share spirit house, underground water-well and common courtyard. Nowadays, there manage each house as single property and divided common yard and water well, So, the local house is originally apart from compound houses, this is characteristic of Muensan village.
- Ornamentation:** After 1934, Colonial architecture influenced to the village, there appears decorative elements, including intricate wood carvings, are integrated into the structure, reflecting local artistic traditions and beliefs. These embellishments serve not only aesthetic purposes but also express cultural and spiritual meanings. From community workshop, we have selected 12 buildings which represent Muensan cultural assets to present Silverware community.

3.2 Co-design and participating planning on Mapping Community Networks and Cultural asset

This session, researcher set participatory mapping and let participants to point and mark key locations where related to the community network & cultural assets. (Kotze, S., 2025) This co-design map shows out sense of place from local residential & business owners. An outcome from creating co-design maps, this map will present actual preservative areas by community-led design. Moreover, these key locations present characteristic on historical – cultural assets with networking of people who engage and become community actors. This co-design cultural map potentially presents key locations, cultural assets and routes for community conservation. Connecting locations will become roads where link to community network where engages with three important stakeholders: Muensan temple, Muensan community and silverware entrepreneurs in this area. Small alleys are walking path to connect with cultural assets on between Wualai street and Nantaram street. Old compound houses are surrounding Wat Muensan (Temple) which presents this village as Temple centered community. City conservation in appears as Wualai neighborhoods, the relation between Muensan & Nantharam villages now was divided with new streets (Fig. 7).

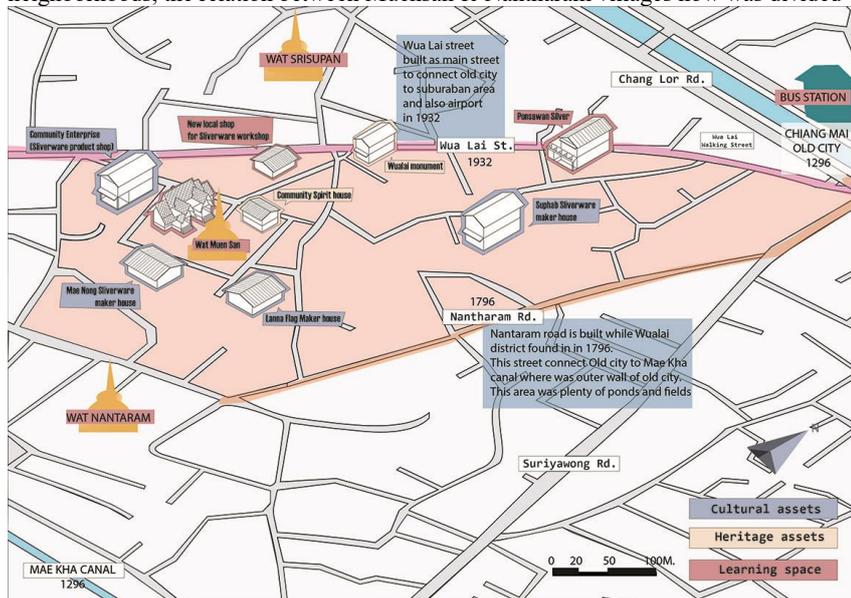


Fig. 7. Muensan Community’s Co-design Cultural mapping

3.3. Comprehensive learning lessons into Community-led learning space

From community discussion, there set 3 lessons following cultural mapping and also community participation. Community-led learning spaces are rooted in the idea that learning should be embedded in everyday life and shaped by the specific needs, interests, and resources of the local community. Community-led learning space 01 – Lanna flag maker house as Traditonal Skill & Story Sharing. Miss Saisunee Chaiwongyart is an owner of this old wooden house. Her house represents coupound traditional house with local wishom such as terrace, slide window and rain gutter. She orinally raises and born with clivercraft family. After she retired from her job, she continues to pass forward traditional skill such as Lanna flag maker, local food and also shares many stories from the village. She adapted her raising floor to create Lanna flag workshop and collect local patterns. Since communtiy sets neighborhood tour, she also create catering as Wualai snack which make bamboo basketwork to present local wisdom. (Fig.8).

Community-led learning space 01:
Lanna flag maker house



Fig. 8. Lanna flag maker house as Traditonal Skill & Story Sharing

Community-led learning space 02 – Kru Ja Community shop as A peer-to-peer education: People in Muensan community still carries on Silverware work until this day. Miss Wilanun srilachai or Kru Ja renovated her own house as local shops. So she wants to connect craftsman product to tourist. Since community set up Community-led learning space, she offers her place to provide Silverware workshop which adapted her shop court as workshop space. This workshop presents Silverware patterns by teaching visitor can make their own souvenirs back home (Fig.9).

Community-led learning space 02:
Kru Ja Community shop



Fig. 9. Community-led learning space 02 – Kru Ja Community shop as A peer-to-peer education

Community-led learning space 03 – Ponsawon Sliver a Collaborative learning: Mr. Thirawat Anakwichayanon, He is a newer generation of Muensan silverware family, He explores new technique and design on Silverware craftsmanship. He adjusts his own house to attach his shops and studio. Since he knew about community-led learning space. He joins and becomes our guide for tour and also provides design consultant. His idea is to collaborate local wisdom with international thought. According to Community-led learning space, his shop becomes one of the tourist attractions where present contemporary design through new kind silverware (Fig. 10).

Community-led learning space 03:
Ponsawon silver



Fig. 10. Community-led learning space 03 – Ponsawon Sliver a Collaborative learning

3.4 Implementation and action

To imply community-led learning space with cultural maps, those spaces and locations do not transform to tourist attraction, that will lead to the path of tourism development without empowering locals (Głabiński, Z. & Duda, T., 2017). From setting up an action for community, researcher continue to create neighborhood economy by Tour & workshops. Locals or Volunteers from community network need to be involved and became lesson givers. (Lindström, K.N., & Larson, M., 2016) We discussed and launched Muen san walking tour & workshop packages which kicked off since March 2024, they promote tour packages from learning history of Muensan temple and community, and 3 workshops; Lanna Flag, Silverware and contemporary sliver design workshops according to 3 learning spaces (Fig. 11). Tour & workshop packages gained new visitors into our cultural tourism during March 2024 – February 2025. Muensan community have welcomed 260 visitors and gained extra income for 60,200 baht. This income will be shared back to actors and be collected as Community fund to preserve Historical and culture capitals in the future.

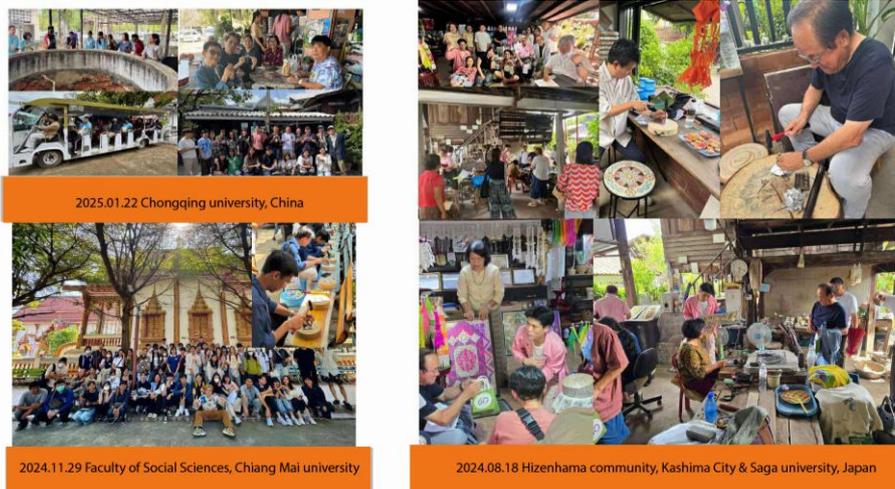


Fig. 11. Tour & Workshop packages for Muensan community’s neighborhood economy

3.5 Evaluation on Neighborhood Economy

Besides, Muensan community provides tour and workshop packages which run for a year long (March, 2024 – February, 2025) and the data is summarised that community have gained incomes and also received satisfy level from feedback survey. (Table 1)

Table 1. Performance of Community-led learning space in Muen San community

No.	Location	New product & service	Number of visiting / learner (Person)	New Incomes (Baht)	Satisfy Level
			March 2024 – February 2025	March 2024 – February 2025	(feedback questionnaire)
1	Muensan temple	Tour	260	6,000	3.75
2	Spirit house	Tour	260	0	2.75
3	Lanna flag maker house	Catering & Lanna Flag Workshop	260	19,200	4.85
4	Nong Silverware Maker house	Tour	260	3,000	3.25
5	SuphabSilverware Maker house	Tour	180	0	3.5
6	Community enterprise shop	Tour	260	0	3.5
7	Wualai monument	Tour venue	180	0	3
8	Kru ja community shops	Silverware workshop	260	26,000	4.75
9	Ponsawan Sliver	Tour guide	180	6,000	4.8

These data present that 3 Community-led learning space gained more income and also receive satisfy level as 4.75-4.8 (Very satisfy). Regrading to Income & feedback, there appears that Community let learning spaces on number 3 & 8 successfully gain budget and also valuable feedback. It presents that cultural tourism is successful with experimental learning where local community takes action as knowledge giver not just event organizer.

3.6 Ownership

At last, community needs to settle their own community conservation with cultural tourism by themselves. Research have set up online website for collecting community data and information about Community storytelling, Key persons & new cultural product, and services. Besides, their memories represent through community network and cultural assets. With this experiential learning, community tour and workshop convincingly create sense of belonging and ownership between locals and visitors (Fig. 12). Furthermore, this is a brand-new website (url: <https://chiangmaiwecare.com/muen-san>) which was designed for 3 pages; storytelling, key persons, and cultural tourism maps. With this website, community network can use it as guide media and local tour promotion (Fig. 13). Undeniable ownership in community network needs more action and time to sustain their sense of belonging. Then, the process of making Community-led learning space needs to keep on collaborative creating with community network.

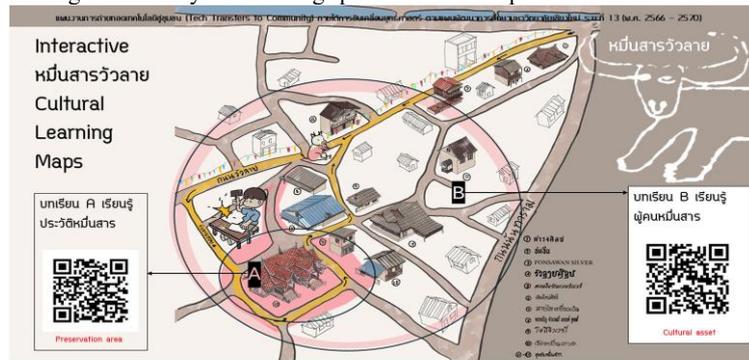


Fig. 12. Muensan community’s final cultural tourism maps



Fig. 13. Website launching with Muensan community and research team

4. Discussion

Towards creating community conservation, an integrative of Community-led learning space is to blends learning with daily life, connects generations, and weaves together local culture, practical skills, social issues, and well-being. Community-led learning space represents knowledge relations between community and heritage assets. These community networks also serve as platforms for the exchange of experiences and the transmission of traditional knowledge and wisdom across generations. Those activities transform to local knowledge by local community. Since most of cultural assets and learning spaces belong to individual, then owners need to have sense of belonging and keeping their assets with stories by themselves. To sustain community, the mechanism of Community-led action relates to Community network & ownership. Both topics are important as input and output, the strength of community conservation focuses on how locals can help cultivate a shared sense of belonging and emotional attachment to cultural assets. Among younger generations, community needs to open and connect to younger and foreign neighbors who ultimately will be contributing to the sustainability of the community over the long term.

5. Conclusion

Community-led learning space is a conceptual framework to collaborative create learning space with community participant in the whole process. In 21st century, city conservation needs to take sustainably action with Community network. Preservation is not only protecting Historical site but also enhancing Experiential learning. Culture in the old city is created and defined with local people, then community needs to be a key person to lead and present way of life as Learning space. This article is a case study to present integrative methods on uncertain urban conservation in developing countries. Following SDG 11: sustainable city and community, sustainability needs the strength of community network which collaborative supports by local government, local community, and stakeholders. Towards city conservation, community is a key to maintain historical and cultural assets in terms of supporting Neighbourhood economy instead of tourism economy.

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