

The SIGUS-MIT Laos Workshop January 2004

Presentation to the MIT Community
Spring 2004

Special Interest Group in Urban Settlement - MIT



The SIGUS-MIT Team

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP in URBAN SETTLEMENT

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LAO People's Democratic Republic



Area: 236,800 sq km
Population: 5,921,545
Population Growth: 2.45%
Climate: tropical monsoon; rainy season (May to November); dry season (December to April)
Natural Resources: timber, hydropower, gypsum, tin, gold, gemstones
Religion: Buddhist 60%, animist and other 40% (including various Christian denominations 1.5%)
Languages: Lao (official), French, English, ethnic languages
Government: Communist State
Capital City: Vientiane

The Workshop

Teamwork:

- Five different sites around Vientiane with students from the National University of Laos and Oxford-Brooks University in England

Our typical day:

- Morning presentations and discussions at the School of Architecture
- On-site work with the communities in the afternoon
- End-of-day debriefing and sharing of information

Goals:

- Gain an understanding of the issues in our respective villages and then develop a short-term project for each community as a catalyst for tackling a broader long-term agenda.



Methodology - I

- **First Week:** I See, You See, We See
Understanding from different perspectives using PRA (*Participatory Rapid Appraisal - an intensive, systematic, semi-structured, learning experience carried out in a community by a multi-disciplinary team which includes community members*)
 - I: We as outsiders see the community (*transept walks, informal conversations, photography, sketching*)
 - You: How the community sees itself
 - We: How we could see the community together - combining the visions to develop an understanding of community needs



Methodology - II

- **Second Week:** Five steps problem-solving structure, tackling issues in partnership with community.

1. Identify options for solving perceived problems
2. Identify how to start the process- a catalyst (something the community can “own”)
3. Identify how that catalyst will “scale-up” to address larger social and economic issues
4. Find partners: who’s going to help both inside and outside of the community
5. Understand what it is we don’t know - we weren’t there for a very long time and there were obviously gaps in our knowledge- identify the gaps so that future partners can deal with them.



Outcome

- Our final product included a presentation to Lao officials and community members, as well as booths where we displayed our ideas.
- Each team had a different “mini-project” (the “catalyst”) which included a wide range of initiatives from marketing brochures to drafts of resettlement guidelines.
- And ended in celebration with traditional Lao dancing!



Nong Boua Tong Tai

The Weaver's Village



Context

- Weaving village on outskirts of Vientiane
- 30 households, 6-7 members each
- Assets: Pheung Mae Gallery, independent weavers, and pond
- Challenges: limited market, drainage, & access to roads

Nong Boua Tong Tai

The Weaver's Village

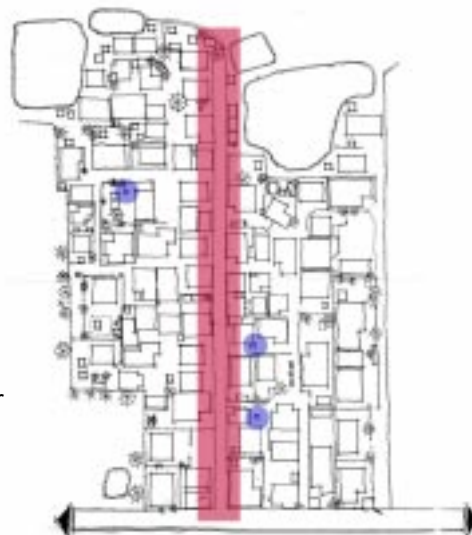


Our Initiatives:

- For Community
 - Marketing Brochure and Poster
 - Community Vision Photo Collage
- For Policy Makers
 - Village Profile
 - BIG IDEAS to think about

Nong Duang Thong

The 'Road-Commons' Village



Context

51 households
320 people
Electricity
Limited piped water

Nong Duang Thong

The 'Road Commons' Village



Priorities

- Water, sanitation
- Sewage system
- Flood control
- Garbage collection
- Road paving, drains

Gnapha Village

Resettlement: From Moderation to Dislocation

Relocation Issues:

- Institutional disenfranchisement.
- Inadequate compensation
- Inadequate assistance
- Site selection
- Site preparation- infrastructure, electricity, water, sanitation
- Lack of services, schools and medical care



Ramifications:

- Economic, social and psychological
- Potential public health and environmental hazards

Gnapha Village

Resettlement: From Moderation to Dislocation

Initiatives

“A New Model of Relocation”

•Participatory, collaborative process between the government, people and NGOs.

•Create Planning, implementation and feedback loop.

•Provide employment and skill training.



Ban Dong Pa Lahn Tha

The New Market

The ‘Forest on the Riverside’

Old Market

New Market



- The landlord
- Renters
- The governor
- Market traders
- Owners
- The temple



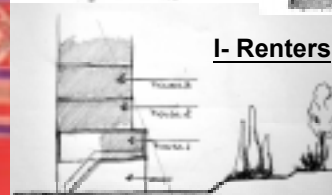
Ban Dong Pa Lahn Tha

The New Market

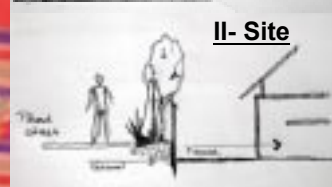
The ‘Forest on the Riverside’



I- Renters



II- Site



III- The Market



Harddonechan Island

The Island 'Paradise'

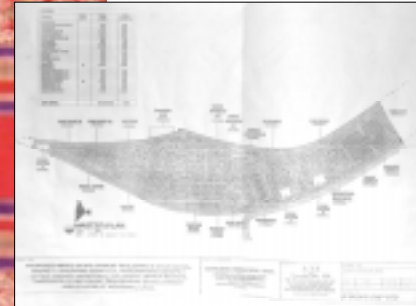


Context

- Island village near the center of Vientiane
- 85 households, approx. 400 residents
- Residents maintain their livelihood by cultivating the adjacent flood plain
- Primarily middle class and environment considered serene and healthy

Harddonechan Island

The Island 'Paradise'



Major Issue

- Malaysian developer building a 14-story 5-star hotel on the island, with plans for development of the rest of the island in the near future
- Proposal oriented toward tourists and high-end residential housing
- Village residents have no information about their future
- Developer and govt. officials seem completely unaware of what exists on island

Harddonechan Island

The Island 'Paradise'



Initiatives

An alternative future which includes:

- Increased awareness about the assets of the island
- Lines of communication between govt. and residents
- Development of small enterprises
- Eco-tourism that benefits both govt. and villagers

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