

Decentralization and Participatory Approach in the Cultural Heritage Management in Local Thailand

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Abstract : This paper illustrates the decentralization of cultural heritage management in local Thailand, a place similar to other middle- income developing countries characterized by rapid tourism-industrialization, weakness formal state institutions and procedures, and intensity use of the cultural heritage resources. The author conducted field research in local Thailand, principally using qualitative primary data gathering. These were combined with records reviews and content analysis of documents. The author also attended local public meetings, and social activities, and interacted casually with local residents and governments. Cultural heritage management has been supposed to improve through multi-stakeholder participation and decentralization. However, processes and outcomes are far from being straightforward and depend on a variety of contingencies and contexts involved. Multi-stakeholder and participatory approach in decentralization of the cultural heritage management in Thailand have pushed to the forefront and sharpened a number of existing problems. However, under the decentralization, the most significant contribution has been in creating real political space where various local stakeholders have become active, respond and address their concerns in various ways vis-à-vis cultural heritage problems. Improving cultural heritage sustainability and viability of local livelihoods through decentralization and participatory approach is by no means certain. However, the shift instead creates spaces potent with possibilities for a meaningful and constructive engagement between and among local state and non-state actors that can lead to synergies and positive outcomes.

Keywords : decentralization, participatory approach, cultural heritage management, multi-stakeholder approach

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