

Ban Dong Pa Lanh Tha

The New Market

WHAT WE LEFT THE COMMUNITY

Our concerns were architectural, addressing the problems that will face the community after a new market and a city park project is implemented. Three main issues were addressed.

First: We targeted the market sellers who had to move to the new market structure and did not know how to organize their move and choose their location to best attract customers. Their moving date was scheduled during our stay, and by interacting with the sellers we learned about the important factors in the display of goods (sun, cone of vision, egalitarian layout, etc.).

We designed a participatory tool (used cardboard to represent the market and the tables) the sellers used to negotiate their tables' layout with the market's architect and landlord. Due to this process we built up trust which



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allowed us to help the sellers in arranging the overall space and to reach a general agreement among all. The photographs above show highlights of the process.

Second: The internal road network proposed by the new market design is intended to be used as an exit for the parked cars and passes on the edge between the market and the village houses. This will compromise the privacy of their inhabitants and will cause drainage problems and flooding to the adjacent houses located on a lower level than the road.

We address this problem by redesigning the road edge by creating a ditch filled with gravel and connected to the village piping infrastructure to prevent houses' flooding. We also proposed a vegetation edge, commonly used in

Vientiane's villages, to insure privacy between roads and houses. Furthermore, this design will help tenants demarcate their property edges, currently unrecognizable.

Third: We are concerned about the few remaining renters who have lived there for 30-40 years, and who have the lowest incomes in the neighborhood. These renters use their houses as small local stores and as a cafeteria providing food for workers on-site. In the late afternoon, these houses become cafes where people play cards outdoors, or serve Lao Beer for the young at night. These people will soon be evicted due to the increase in land value, and their houses will be replaced with higher-income buildings designed to incorporate services that will cater for the park and the market. We recognize that these developments will inevitably take place to benefit first from the price of land that has doubled in the village, and second from the views for the future park.

We recommended design alternatives that attempt to incorporate the renters within the new building itself. The new proposed buildings will have shops on the first floor, and three upper levels of higher income apartments. Since the inhabitants already work in their shops and cafes, we propose to house these families on the shop level. In this way, while they are housed they will work in their own shop. This alternative will allow them to remain in their community, secure their living, and a house.

THE COMMUNITY

The area contained all the components that cities face undergoing urbanization, the village being pressed between private and public developments. We 'saw' how the village, under the effect of both projects, is transforming from a local community-based site and market place into an urban center with a large public park, confronted by economic forces shaping the profile and life of the inhabitants. It is undergoing gentrification, changing from a lower-middle income neighborhood to higher income through public eviction and private investment.

Ban Dong Pa Lanh Tha is an urban village which lies between a major shopping artery and Nong Chanh Park, a new public development. It houses several communities and commercial activities. The street facade is lined with two to three story apartment buildings with shops on the ground floor on the street. An extension of the street market is an old vegetable and meat market owned by Mr. Suvannasak, a major landlord in the village. This market is located to the northern side of the village between houses. However, this market is to be replaced by a new bigger one. Behind this major commercial artery resides the Dong Pa lanh Tha community in small detached houses with individual gardens. Other houses share common open spaces where people offer chairs and tables to receive guests. Recently several big houses or 'villas' with fancy fences and woodwork were built.

Dong Pa Lanh Tha houses middle to higher income families. Many residents earn their living through working in the shops on the main road; others





The old and new market.

are responsible for the temple located on the southern side of the village, while others hold important positions in the community including the village head, and the landlord Mr. Suvannasak who is also the governor of the Vientiane province. A few of the residents (mainly women) work in Mr. Suvannasak's privately-owned market whereas the remaining majority of the market sellers come from other villages across the road.

Lately Dong Pa Lanh Tha underwent several major changes. It is one of the first villages to be serviced with sewage infrastructure. Currently, the municipality is undertaking a pilot infrastructure project that aims to connect all houses to three major septic tanks through a piped system. Vientiane's infrastructure is based on individual septic tanks for each building, so a project providing a pipe network for the village is an important initiative. However, the presence of Mr. Suvannasak - who is the owner of the market as well as the governor - and the development of the park project, has played an important role in realizing and funding the sewer network project.

The village morphology has been subject to changes including the erection of a new market structure financed by Mr Suvannasak, the main



The new public park and pond.

landlord, which replaces an older one. The new design includes several structures. The main one is a popular market following the same typology as the older one and is intended for selling meat, vegetables, groceries, and contains a food court with an additional floor with offices and a few shops. A nearby independent building houses a greater number of shops for rent. In between these two markets, toilet facilities are provided for the market area. These multiple structures are included in the general design for the area with a public paid parking lot serviced by an internal road network.

The implementation of the park project has also had an impact on the village's social and financial status. The project caused the eviction of several families, illegal settlers mainly from Vietnam, who took refuge in the empty lands bordering Ban Dong Pa Lanh Tha village. Another result is the increase in the real estate value of the land as well as rent prices have increased causing a large turnover in the village population.

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