

Is Bangkok ready to be a Creative City?

“Creative Economy” has become a familiar term among Thai people and they are beginning to understand it better. Now it is time to extend this knowledge about the creative economy into a real action. This is one necessary step to prepare Thailand for the creative economy regime. Thailand Creative & Design Center or TCDC invited policy makers and idea leaders who are responsible for developing creative cities to share and exchange their views in a seminar under the project of “**Bangkok Creative City**” on November 30, 2009.

Somsak Chantawattana, director of the Office of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, shared his ideas and policies about how to get Bangkok ready to be a creative city. He mentioned that this is a new policy with Government’s support and it will require cooperation from many organisations. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) said that Bangkok can be developed into two main areas -- Physical development and Human development. BMA has planned five core strategies which are:

- 1) Infrastructure development, including public transportation in Bangkok and its suburb area
- 2) Creating an atmosphere for knowledge-based economic development, which will lead to human development
- 3) Charming Bangkok by making it a beautiful safe city with arts, architecture and cultural heritage
- 4) Promoting an eco-friendly Bangkok, making Bangkok green and clean which allows people to live a good life
- 5) Bangkok as the centre of the region by centralising all management, including environment management, pollution management, and the improvement of river and canal conditions in Bangkok

Mr. Somsak said “To make Bangkok a creative city, we must look at human assets. We must develop humans first because humans are the creators.”

Sorapong Paitoonpong, head of mass transit system development at the Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTP) spoke of plans for infrastructure development. This is the organisation which has to solve a major problem of Bangkok: the traffic.

“Creativity must be consistent with the way people travel, so they can access public transportation throughout areas of the city and reach their destination quickly.” Mr.

Sorapong said.

To prepare Bangkok as a creative city with a convenient transportation, the OTP already has plans and projects for a Mass Transit system. One of the projects is Bang Sue Central station, which will be the centre of Bangkok’s public transportation with linkages between MRT and State Railway, Mo Chit Bus terminal and BTS. These will be the most efficient public transportation networks for the creative city.

Mr. Sorapong mentioned that the key to infrastructure development is “two reduce and two increase.” This principle is reducing the time of the journey and reducing the use of energy and resources by increasing the quality of living and increasing the competitiveness of the country. This is the foundation of the creative city under the creative economy.

Adhiruth Thothaveesansuk, Managing Director, Convergence, True Corporation Plc talked about an important role of the private sector in preparing Bangkok to be a creative city by developing the infrastructure, especially by using information and communication technology. Mr. Adhiruth believes that the creative economy raises living standards, saying “The quality of life will be better if we have each other.” Access to information through technology is important, especially high-speed Internet. True Corporation is trying to push forward and provide widespread access of a good quality high-speed Internet system such as 30 Mbps high speed Internet, 7.2 Mbps 3G, high-speed Wi-Fi Internet (8 Mbps) all over Thailand next year, which still requires additional support from the Government.

Mr. Adhiruth believes that creativity never stops. His company, True Corporation, will not stop developing the technology for all Thais to be able to access sources of information. He determines to make Thai society better through the use of this technology. "Creativity is not always difficult or a brand new idea. It could just be making something better." He said. When you make something better, that creativity can create value, which benefits the country.

Karuna Dechatiwong Na Ayuttaya, Chief of the International Events Section, Events Planning Division, Events Department at the Tourism Authority of Thailand has shared the promotional scheme about cultural tourism in Bangkok, saying "Bangkok has its selling point as the city of experience. Bangkok has diverse people with its own culture and is fully equipped with high technology. Statistics show that more than half of the tourists revisit Bangkok because Bangkok has something to sell."

As a main organisation responsible for promoting tourism, TAT sees the potential of Bangkok as a travel hub of the country and the region. Bangkok has convenient transportation, high technology, along with a cultural heritage. These outstanding characteristics of Bangkok are reasons that draw people from around the world to visit and experience the city that never sleeps.

Kittiratana Pitipanich, Design and Creative Business Development Director of Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC) talked about the intention to transform Bangkok to a creative city. He represents one of the main organisations appointed by the Government to assure that Bangkok is ready to be the creative city. Mr. Kittiratana believes that even though the Government has launched the creative city policy, the most important factors are the smallest units in the society. "We cannot look at the big picture only. At the end we must improve the people." Kittiratana said.

This is the key role of TCDC, to improve people's latent talents by providing libraries, exhibitions and training, with cooperation from other organisations to drive the creative economy into the National agenda. To make Bangkok a creative city, TCDC is the organisation that will prepare human resources by developing the potential of people not only in Bangkok, but all Thais who are creative ready for the creative economy.

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