



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FORM

TITLE OF THE PAPER

HERITAGE AT RISK OF FLOODING, TOURISM AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF AYUTTHAYA, THAILAND

ABSTRACT (400 - 600 words) has to be structured into 4 sub-headings (**PURPOSE, METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS, CONTRIBUTION**)

Purpose - Flooding is a natural phenomenon, although, a major hazard. During the past decades we have witnessed some of the most severe floodings, which have had damaging impacts on local communities, natural landscapes and cultural heritage sites and, as a consequence, also on the local tourism industry. Thailand is not new to flooding: the country, indeed, has always suffered from regular flooding and local communities have learnt to co-exist with the phenomenon and even to celebrate their relationship with water. However, due to the rampant urbanisation and climate change, flooding in Thailand is now becoming unpredictable and extremely dangerous, and the need for more targeted preventive and mitigating strategies is imperative. This paper aims to explore the ways in which heritage sites, in Thailand - affected by natural disasters- are perceived by tourists as well as the different effects recent flooding has had on local heritage sites, tourism experiences and communities in Thailand.

Methodology - This paper's methodology is based on a thematic analysis of different flooding adaption options and strategies for the Ayutthaya Heritage Site. In November 2015, the site's flood risk management plan was reviewed and preliminary observations in situ were conducted. These formed the basis for the following research phase (September-October 2016), which consisted of an in-depth study of the existing planning and long-term interventions and on a set of interviews (with the relevant stakeholders), which addressed the complexity of flood risk management in the land nearby Ayutthaya.

Findings - The severe flooding in 2011 has not only led to the destruction of some of heritage assets in the site of Ayutthaya but it has also affected the socio-economic and touristic values associated with the site. The study highlights the need for a more comprehensive flood mitigation strategy for the historic city of Ayutthaya. Following the fieldwork, both short-term and long-term restoration plans were developed and proposed to the Thai Government. However, due to a lack of integrated work in relation to cultural heritage, tourism and disaster risk management, the Government has limited capacity to implement the suggested plans. Therefore we argue that a community-based framework should be developed so that local communities, through their knowledge of seasonal flooding, are engaged with the preservation of their cultural heritage and flood management. This, additionally, would be

beneficial for the preservation and development of the local heritage tourism industry.

Contribution - The paper highlights the importance that heritage (both as a cultural and touristic asset) has for local communities as well as the sense of cultural responsibility and resilience - triggered by the fear of possible permanent damages to the heritage sites. The study is based on a project funded by the BA and the Newton Fund and it intends to present the initial findings of the research.

KEY WORDS (3-6)

Flooding, heritage tourism, cultural heritage; resilient communities; Thailand

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