

Brick and Pottery Kilns in Mang Thit, Vinh Long: Local Knowledge and Community of Practice in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This research examines qualitative methods and primary research that evaluates local knowledge and the "community of practice" (CoP). The Mekong Delta of Vietnam, located in Mang Thit, Vinh Long, has a rich history of traditional brick and pottery manufacturing. The goal of this study is to monitor the historical formation of the craft village, analyze mechanisms of intergenerational knowledge transfer, and consider socio-economic development. This study shows that the region's natural geology, particularly the amount of clay surrounding the Co Chien River, has a dense canal system that is one of the essential factors for Mang Thit's foundation, as well as key hubs for brick and pottery manufacturing during the colonial period. CoP operated in this craft village by combining customary methods with experiential learning and incremental innovation. The knowledge and skills of this approach are passed down through families and artisan groups. However, these industries face difficulties due to urbanization, limited resources, stricter environmental regulations, and market shifts, resulting in reduced production, a lack of workforce, and weakened traditional practices. Artisans, businesses, and local authorities are developing adaptive ideas by combining them with sustainable development policies to enhance craft innovation and cultural tourism. This research promotes an expanded discussion of cultural heritage, rural adaptability, and the resilience of local knowledge systems in the face of socio- environmental transformations.

Keywords: Mang Thit Brick and Pottery, Community of Practice, Local Knowledge, Mekong Delta.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional handicraft plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity of a region. They reflect both craftsmanship, values, beliefs and historical heritage of the local communities (UNESCO, 2003). Handcrafted products represent creativity, skill and resilience (Nguyen & Pham, 2019). In Vietnam, craft villages such as Bát Tràng ceramics, Bình Dương ceramics along with Southern brick-pottery sectors are the centres of production hubs and as cultural landscapes were traditional knowledge and artisanal techniques are transmitted through generations (Pham, 2020; Tran, 2018). The origins of Đông Sơn era to the Lý, Trần, and Nguyễn dynasties, argues the enduring strength of Vietnamese handicrafts and integrates daily life, architecture, and spiritual practices (Nguyen, 2016; Yamagata, 2014). In this broader context, Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta stands out for its fertile alluvial soil, rich clay resources and extensive waterway transportation networks (Chuc & Hung, 2022). These natural and cultural conditions fostered the rise of Mang Thit brick and pottery craft village, which grew into Southern Vietnam's most significant

production centre. At the peak of 20th century, the village operated more than 1500 kilns, and produced 100 million of bricks every year, earning titles such as the “Kingdom of Bricks and Tiles” and the “Red Kingdom” of the Mekong Delta (Nguyen, 2003; Society of Indochina Studies, 2017). The kiln system reflects both technical innovation and environmental adaptation, while also expresses the Five elements cosmology- Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth through integrated production cycle (Ta, 2021). In recent years, Mang Thit has faced numerous challenges such as urbanization, market fluctuations and government policies limiting clay-fired brick production which led to demolition in hundreds of kilns and substantial decline in the production capacity (Vietnam Government, 2010; 2012). These changes have directly influenced local livelihoods and pose serious risk of indigenous knowledge and community-based practices over centuries (Nguyen & Le, 2021). Nevertheless, new initiatives such as collective trademark “Vinh Long Red Pottery”, the development of cultural tourism, Red Pottery and Green Economy Festival creates new pathway to sustain the village’s vitality (Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Vinh Long, 2023). Although many studies have discussed the Vietnamese ceramics have received considerable attention on major hubs such as Bát Tràng and Biên Hòa (Nguyen, 2015; Tran, 2020). The particular case of Mang Thit remains underexamined, especially when approached through the dual lenses of Local Knowledge and Community of Practice (CoP) - frameworks that explain how knowledge is created, maintained, and transmitted in social contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In addition, the concept of Community Practice (Hardcastle, 2011) expands the analysis to issues of participation, empowerment, and community adaptation within broader policy and market environments, while Geertz’s (1983) notion of Local Knowledge highlights the interpretive and cultural dimensions embedded in production practices. Integrating these theoretical approaches offers a valuable insight for understanding how traditional knowledge is conserved, restructured, and adapted under conditions of social change. This study, not only addresses a significant academic gap but also offers practical insights for the sustainable preservation and development of the Mang Thit brick and pottery village in the era of modernization and globalization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore indigenous knowledge and the community of practice in the Mang Thit brick and pottery village, Vinh Long province. The research focuses on four main objectives: (1) To study the historical development of Mang Thit Kilns, Vinh Long, in the dimension of the brick and pottery community of practice; (2) To study Local Knowledge of the Special Physical Space of the Traditional Mang Thit Brick and Pottery Village in the Mekong Delta; (3) To study the social networks of practice in the production and distribution management of the Mang Thit brick and pottery village.; (4) To study Mang Thit as a community of practice in the context of modern economic development in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The qualitative approach was selected because it explores the deep engagement of people’s experiences, meanings and community interpretations of production practices within the cultural context. The case study on Mang Thit represents as the example for traditional craft village which have been changed because of modernization and globalization. Many data’s have been collected to ensure comprehensiveness and reliability. Semi structured interviews were conducted with artisans, kiln owners, craft workers, traders, cultural officials and tourists. These interviews are mainly engaged on production techniques, knowledge and skills transmission from generation to generations, and ways which the community adapts new economic and social pressures. Participant observation was mainly in Kiln clusters along with Mang Thit River as well as during major community events such as the Red Pottery and Green Economy Festival. During these observations, detailed notes were taken on production routines, labor division, gender roles and social interactions with the community. In addition, historical and policy documents, including the *Monographie de la Province de Vinh Long* (1911), local reference books, government reports, and national legal documents (Vietnam Government, 2010; 2012), were analyzed to provide historical and regulatory context. Selected visual materials, such as photographs, maps, and field notes, were incorporated to support the analysis while ensuring respect for privacy and community rights. All collected data were transcribed and systematically analysed, resulting in the identification of four central themes: (1) the historical development of the craft village; (2) indigenous knowledge in brick and pottery production; (3) community of practice structures and modes of transmission; and (4) challenges and adaptive strategies in the context of modernisation and globalisation. Additionally, the field data used in this study are secondary sources, particularly scholarly publications, museum archives, exhibition catalogues, government policy papers, and media coverage. These resources provide a broader perspective on historical developments, policy changes, and indigenous knowledge of formal and informal forums. From the perspective of combining secondary resources with field-based data has methodological triangulation increases the comprehensiveness, validity, and depth of analysis. This method allows for comparing, cross-checking and validating data from different sources, notably governmental papers, archival records of the craftsmen community. This study creates a strong basis for comprehending how indigenous knowledge and community practices are maintained, reorganised, and negotiated

in the face of modernisation and globalisation, in addition to reconstructing the historical and cultural background of the Mang Thít craft village.

Research Results

Historical Development of the Mang Thít Brick and Pottery Kiln System: A Community of Practice Perspective

The Mang Thít brick and pottery village in Vinh Long Province, Mekong Delta, represents one of the most distinctive cultural–technical landscapes in Southeast Asia. Beyond their material function, its kilns operated as social, economic, and cultural institutions embedded in community life. This study applies Wenger (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) framework, alongside Geertz (1983), stated that, concept of local knowledge and Hardcastle et al. (2011) community practice perspective, to analyse Mang Thít’s historical trajectory as a dynamic ecosystem of learning, adaptation, and cultural reproduction. The kiln system evolved through six major stages: formation, expansion, wartime interruption, post-war reconstruction, golden age, and decline with reorientation. Each reflects interactions among technology, economy, social networks, and ecological adaptation, which is mentioned in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The traditional production space of Mang Thít brick village stretches along both banks of the Thây Cai – Co Chien canal, where round brick kilns stand closely together, forming a distinctive riverside landscape of the red pottery region. (Source: Researcher, 2024)

Formation (18th–19th centuries): Establishing Foundations

Early round kilns were built along with the Mang Thít and Cổ Chiên rivers, were more clay and waterways support the production and trade. In Nineteenth century, oral histories and local records emerged and after 1887 it often recorded as a foundational moment (Huynh Minh, 1967/2023). Local knowledge guided every stage of production from guiding clay selection and siting kilns to embed spiritual offerings to craft ancestors with the technical practice (Iran, 2017). Expansion (late 19th–early 20th centuries): The growth of colonial urban areas created a rising demand for durable bricks and tiles mentioned in Figure 2. The Monographie de la Province de Vinh Long

(1911), stated that, recorded significant capital investment and specialization in roofing tiles. Distribution networks expanded as traders and boat operators transported products through dense waterways to Saigon and surrounding provinces. Interruption (1945–1975): The First Indochina War and Vietnam War devastated rural industries. Many kilns were destroyed or abandoned, yet informal cooperation and shared repertoires sustained community identity (Nguyen, 2003; Vinh Long Gazetteer, 2017). Reconstruction (1976–1989): After reunification, small household groups gradually resumed production, often within cooperative frameworks. Knowledge transmission persisted through apprenticeship, though intensified clay extraction created long-term ecological pressures. Golden Age (1990–2010): Economic reforms under Renovate spurred unprecedented growth. Thousands of kilns operated, earning Mang Thít the title “Red Kingdom of the Mekong Delta.” Cooperative associations thrived, and experimentation expanded the community’s repertoire of practices, representing the full

maturity of the CoP (Hardcastle, 2011). Decline and Reorientation (2010 - present): Resource depletion, rising fuel costs, and stringent environmental policies (e.g., Decision No. 1830/QĐ-UBND, 2013) led to widespread closures. In response, households shifted to decorative pottery, cultural tourism, and cleaner technologies, redefining the CoP around heritage preservation and innovation.

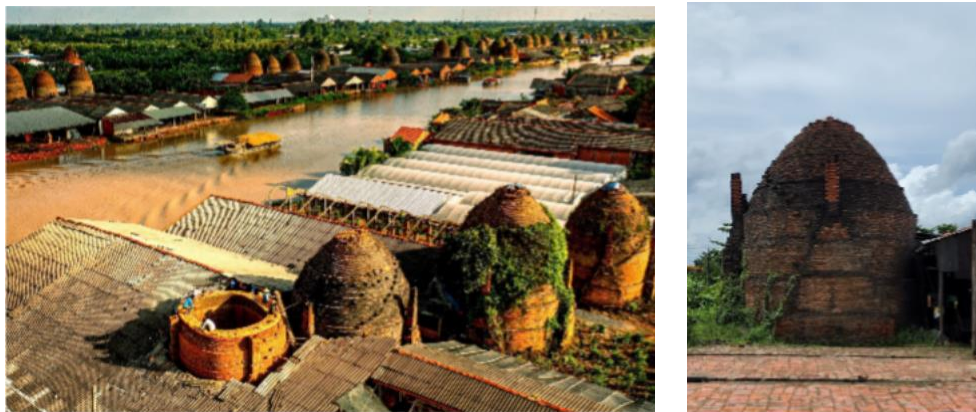


Figure 2: Traditional brick and pottery kilns (Source: Researcher, 2024)

Comparative cases reinforce these findings: kinship-based resilience in Gujarat, India (Sikdar, 2015), family workshops in Noricum, Austria (Auer, 2018), and ecological pottery traditions in Guilan, Iran (Carayannis & Alexander, 2006). Mang Thit stands for its distinctive river ecology, kinship networks and state negotiation, along with the development of kiln industry, traditional craft highlights as an evolving knowledge system, not as a cultural static relic. Mang Thit was seemed as a living ecosystem. Were local knowledge, spatial organisation and social networks of sustainable resilience being reflects through the CoP lens. This case contributes the insights for heritage- based communities to provide sustainable development and cultural resilience in the view of globalization and climate change.

Local Knowledge and the Special Physical Space of Production

Mang Thit’s spatial production shows the rich indigenous knowledge and continuous transmission and adaptation across generations. Whereas, modern industrial areas are typical product of centralized planning and formal engineering, Mang Thit demonstrates the community-driven system were environmental conditions, local practices and cultural values are integrated to produce a distinct manufacturing landscape. This study emphasizes that production space in Mang Thit should not be reduced to a technical or economic category. Instead, it should be understood as a socio- ecological and cultural system where knowledge is materially inscribed into the organization of kilns, houses, courtyards, and riverine infrastructure, **are shown in Figure 3.**

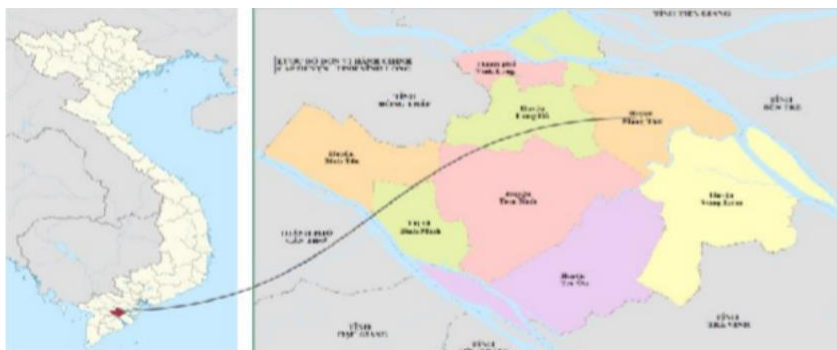


Figure 3: Location of Mang Thit district, Vinh Long Province, Mekong Delta. The maps and satellite view highlight its position along the Co Chien River, where fertile alluvial land and waterways have supported the development of traditional brick and pottery production

Drawing on Clifford Geertz (1983) argument that local knowledge is embodied in the practical reasoning of communities, the Mang Thit case illustrates how knowledge of soil types, river hydrology, seasonal rhythms, and climatic patterns becomes spatialized in production practices. Simultaneously, Wenger (1998) theory of Communities of Practice (CoP) provides a framework for understanding the production space as a learning

environment, were spatial arrangements both reflect and reproduce collective knowledge. Hardcastle et al. (2011) discussed that community practice involves current negotiation and adaptation, an insight that relevant in examining the transformations of Mang Thít are under modernization pressures. Mang Thít's production space is the central space for the mastery of red clay; the base production were the bricks and pottery. Artisans distinguish clay types such as high-acid "phen" clay, dark brown deposits and sandy mixtures by observing them generation to generations, tactile experiences and occupational language. Higher acidity clay will produce and dark-fired products, whereas, lighter clays are used for the roof tiles or decorative ware. These knowledges were rarely codified in written manuals; instead, it passed down through apprenticeship, or through the conversations in kiln sites and embodied practices are **illustrated in Figure 4**. Kiln placement further indicates the indigenous spatial logic. Traditional kilns were grouped along with the banks of the Mang Thít and Cỗ Chiên rivers, because of the proximity to raw materials and logistical efficiency. Riverboats simultaneously transport the products to markets in Saigon, in Mekong Delta products were exports deliver clay and rice husks. The rivers were functioned as the arteries of both material supply and distribution networks. The orientation of drying courtyards reflects a similar attention to environmental detail. Courtyards are carefully positioned to maximise sunlight and airflow while avoiding excessive exposure to rain during the wet season. Local knowledge of prevailing winds and seasonal changes enables artisans to adjust production cycles. For instance, large-scale firing is avoided during peak rainy months, while clay extraction intensifies during dry periods. Such seasonal adjustments illustrate what Ingold (2011) describes as "being alive to the environment," where knowledge is adaptive rather than abstract.



Figure 4. Production scenes in the Mang Thít brick and pottery village, showing clay storage, molding, kiln tools, drying areas, and artisans at work. These images highlight the integration of manual skills and local knowledge. (Source: Researcher, 2024)

The integration between Mang Thít's environment and spatial organization is not linear but reciprocal. Artisans continuously adapt spatial production in soil, water, climate and reshapes the landscapes through clay pits artificial ponds and widened canals. Over the decades, these changes have transformed the region's topography and creates new opportunities such as fishponds and generates ecological challenges (erosion, waterlogging, land subsidence). This dual interaction reflects that knowledge is not static but enacted in everyday practices. Mang Thít's terrain integrates natural and cultural factors; by inventing a hybrid habitat, where humans should balance ecological limits. The community's environmental strategies are an example of an adaptive system: kilns are grouped to maximise fuel sharing; houses are located near courtyards for immediate oversight of drying processes; and boat landings are combined into production compounds to access the fluid mobility of goods and labour Geertz (1983). Comparative evidence reinforces this point. In the Prajapati community of Gujarat, India, Sikdar (2015) notes that open-air pottery production also incorporates environmental rhythms into its spatial organization. Similarly, Auer's (2018) argued that Noricum pottery sites in Austria highlights how communities of practice embedded environmental adaptation into kiln construction and settlement patterns. Mang Thít thus resonates with global craft traditions while maintaining a unique riverine ecology at its core as **shown in Figure 5**. Beyond its material functions, the production space of Mang Thít conveys deeply rooted social and cultural meanings. The "kiln-house-courtyard" model exemplifies an integrated unit where domestic life and artisanal labor coexist. Courtyards serve as both drying yards and communal gathering places, while houses adjacent to kilns allow families to monitor firing cycles throughout the night. Children grow up amid the smell of clay and smoke, learning skills by observation long before a formal apprenticeship begins.



Figure 5. A painted depiction of the bustling riverfront life in the Mang Thít brick and pottery village, where kilns, houses, and boats formed an integrated socio-economic landscape. Commissioned by artisan Tu Bui1, this artwork reconstructs the vibrant atmosphere of “trading on the river, working on the shore” and is currently displayed in his Red Pottery Village. (Source: Researcher, 2024)

Spatial integration reflects the intergenerational knowledge across generations. Wenger (1998) discussed that communities of practice thrive on skills and reinforced through engagement and apprenticeship. In Mang Thít, spatial organization becomes a learning environment that includes technical knowledge in daily routines. Cultural beliefs further sanctify production spaces. Rituals dedicated to the *Tổ nghề* (craft ancestor) or *Thần Lò* (kiln deity) are conducted at specific sites within courtyards or shrines adjacent to kilns, are **shown in Figure 6**. Such practices reinforce the moral order of labour, linking productivity to spiritual protection. As Huynh (2003) notes in his study of Southern folk beliefs, these rituals transform production zones into cultural entities, reminding artisans that their work is embedded in both material and metaphysical worlds.

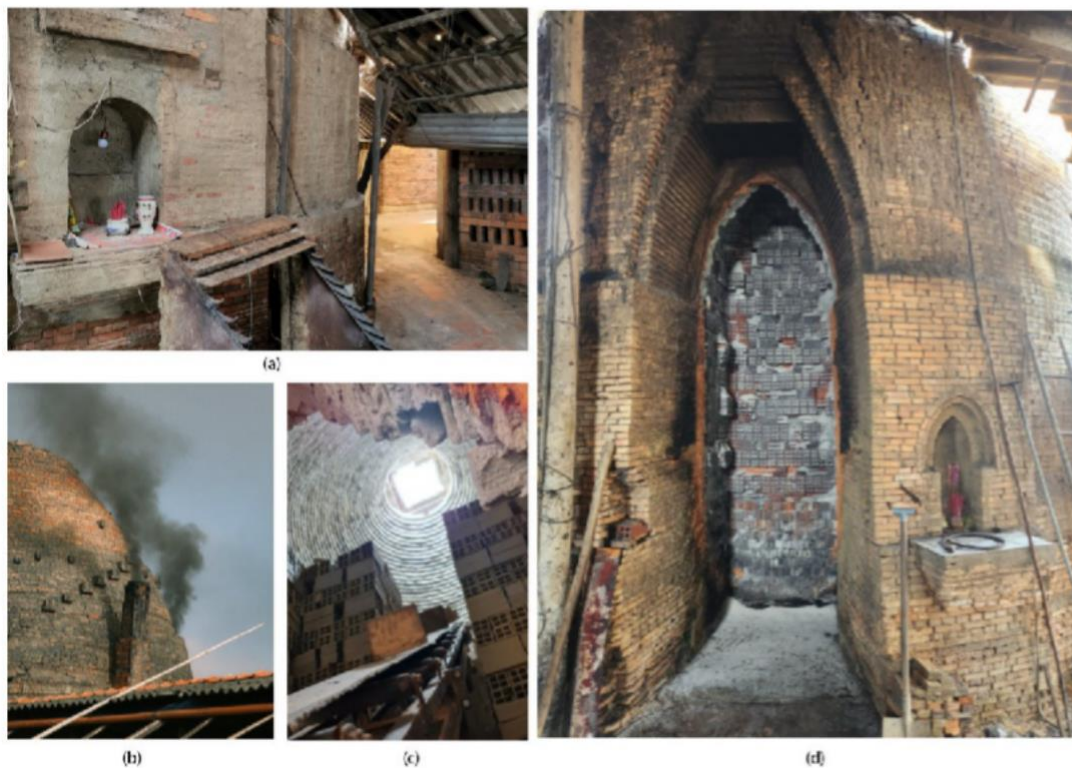


Figure 6: (a) Ancestral altar in front of a traditional kiln. Each kiln is equipped with a solemn altar dedicated to the craft ancestors, reflecting the community’s deep respect for tradition. Visible structural elements (b) include the chimney (*ống khói*), (c) the side vent (*lỗ đông*), and (d) the firing door (*cửa lò*), which together illustrate the integration of technical design with cultural–spiritual practices. (Source: Researcher, 2024)

The rise of modernization and regulations have reshaped Mang Thít’s spatial organization, expanding roads by reducing the reliance of river kilns and shifting sites to industrial zones were communities adapt in parallel. Many households have diversified into decorative pottery, bonsai planters, and garden ornaments, reconfiguring production spaces into workshops that serve both craft and tourism. Cooperative models have enabled shared investment in cleaner technologies, while tourism initiatives encourage visitors to experience “living heritage”

through direct interaction with artisans. These adaptive strategies exemplify Hardcastle et al. (2011) assertion that community practice involves resilience and negotiation with external forces. Significantly, changes in local knowledge were not constant. Moreover, it develops by introducing innovative technology and economic opportunities in a particular way. To increase yield, some craftsmen combine traditional sun-drying methods with automated presses, whereas they still use traditional knowledge to assess the quality of clay. These results show that the hybrid model will evolve to generate more new inventions and greater consistency. The Mang Thít brick and pottery village illustrates how local knowledge and spatial organization coalesce to sustain craft traditions over centuries. The production space here is not simply a technical arrangement, but a dynamic knowledge system that integrates environmental adaptation, socio-cultural meaning, and economic resilience. By embedding indigenous knowledge into the physical layout of kilns, courtyards, and houses, the community ensures not only the survival of craft practices but also their capacity to adapt under modernization pressures. This analysis affirms Geertz's (1983) argument that local knowledge is materially embedded, Wenger's (1998) view of communities of practice as learning ecosystems, and Hardcastle et al.'s (2011) emphasis on adaptive community practice. Comparative perspectives from India and Austria further highlight that while craft-based spatial practices are globally resonant, the Mang Thít case is distinctive in its integration of riverine ecology, kinship-based apprenticeship, and ritual sanctification of space. Mang Thít's production spaces state that preservation of the traditional craft community is not only achieved by technological implications, still the potential of traditional knowledge is considered as a source for environmental, social, and economic transitions. As modernisation and climate change intensify, such spatially embedded practices offer critical insights for designing policies that respect heritage while fostering sustainable development in the Mekong Delta and beyond.

Social Practice Networks in Production and Distribution

Local knowledge and production spaces formed a foundation for craft village; it was the social practices that preserves the long-term vibrancy of the Mang Thít brick and pottery system. Artisans, kiln owners, traders and labourer's acts as separate individuals but as members of a shared Community of Practice (CoP) united by an ongoing interaction and strengthened through collective set of skills and traditions (Wenger, 1998). Hardcastle et al. (2011) perspective on Community Practice further highlights how these networks fostered self-organization, negotiation, and adaptation in the face of market fluctuations, policy reforms, and ecological pressures. Traditional brick kilns lining the banks of the Co Chien River are fully illustrated in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Traditional brick kilns lining the banks of the Co Chien River in Mang Thít form a "network" of production closely tied to local waterway transportation.

(Source: *On Tri Duc* (April 23, 2023))

During these developmental stages, the kinship relationship plays a crucial role in shaping the manufacturing network. Most kilns are family-based enterprises in which the fathers transformed the artisanal skills to their wives, sons and siblings, studies discussed that technical methods transform through generations. There is a significant relationship among kiln owners and master artisans: Master artisans not only mastered in technical procedures, but also literate the knowledge to younger employees through auxiliary tasks, such as carrying clay or sun-drying bricks,

before advancing to the complex responsibilities like kiln stacking and firing. This form of “learning by doing” exemplifies Wenger (1998) notion of legitimate peripheral participation, while also conferring social prestige upon master artisans, who were considered as craftsmen owners. Equally critical to the vitality of the network were traders and boat operators, who sustained Mang Thít’s river-based distribution system. Bricks and pottery were transported across the Mekong Delta to Ho Chi Minh City, Cần Thơ, Đồng Tháp, and even Cambodia through a dense web of waterways. Traders were not passive transporters but acted as market mediators, advising producers on demand patterns and product diversification. This embeddedness of economic activity within social ties reflects Granovetter (1985) argument that trust and reciprocity are central to economic organisation, reducing risks while enhancing market adaptability. The Renovate reforms of 1986 marked a turning point. As production expanded rapidly, households began to employ seasonal labourers from neighbouring areas, thereby diversifying the workforce and increasing flexibility. Informal associations emerged in which kiln owners coordinated pricing, shared fuel resources, and scheduled firing cycles to avoid mutual disruption practices that exemplify the adaptive negotiation capacities described by Hardcastle (2011). At the same time, connections with private enterprises and foreign partners stimulated exports, encouraging the standardisation of products and the reorganisation of both labour and distribution systems. These shifts illustrate how a traditional kinship-based CoP could restructure itself into more open and cooperative forms under conditions of rapid economic change. More difficulties were faced by the network during the period of 2010. The development of the traditional method was exploited because of over-extraction of clay, usage of non-fired bricks and strong environmental restrictions that polluting kilns. The outcome of this study states that diversification of households into decorative pottery, bonsai planters, and garden ornaments, or merging tourism by opening kilns to visitors. Hardcastle (2011) discussed that these approaches should be rebuilt between communities to deal with external consequences. Among its economic dimensions, the network sustains the cultural and social values. Mutual support was evident in day-to-day life by supporting and helping each other during kiln firing and collective efforts, shields, drying bricks are from sudden rains. Ritual practices such as ancestor worships, offerings at the Ngũ Hành shrine and annual Brick and Pottery Festival enhances the shared sense of identity by creating opportunity in knowledge sharing and intergenerational continuity. These cultural and ritual functions anchored the production system in a moral and spiritual framework that expands far beyond material output. On the view of comparative analysis, Mang Thít’s network stands out for the way its technical, social and cultural logics are tightly interlinked. The Prajapati potters of Gujarat, India, maintain their craft through kinship ties and religious rituals (Sikdar, 2015), while Noricum’s ceramic communities in Austria sustained themselves through small-scale, family-based knowledge transmission (Auer, 2018). Yet Mang Thít is distinctive in its interweaving of social networks with riverine ecology. The waterways of the Mekong Delta not only supported production but also facilitated a vibrant distribution system that connected rural producers with urban and cross-border markets. Taken together, the social practice network of Mang Thít constitutes the backbone of its production–distribution system. It preserves indigenous knowledge, sustains market linkages, and underpins the community’s adaptive capacity. Theoretically, the case reinforces Wenger’s (1998) proposition that CoPs endure through continuous participation and a shared knowledge base, Granovetter (1985), stated that, assertion that social ties are fundamental to economic organization, and Hardcastle (2011), view of community practice as a source of resilience. Practically, it demonstrates that the survival of a craft village depends not only on technical production but equally on social relations, cultural rituals, and collective identity. This embeddedness has enabled Mang Thít to continually restructure and remain resilient in the face of modernization, globalization, and climate change.

Mang Thít as a Community of Practice in Modern Economic Development

In the contemporary era, the development of traditional craft villages must reconcile heritage preservation with the pressures of market economies, globalization, and climate change. With a history spanning more than two centuries, the Mang Thít brick and pottery village stands at a critical juncture: it must safeguard its artisanal identity while simultaneously restructuring to align with sustainable development standards (Figure 8 and 9). Drawing upon Wenger (1998) framework of Communities of Practice (CoP), Mang Thít emerges not merely as a site of material production but as a dynamic learning community where technical knowledge, social skills, and cultural values are continuously reproduced. Complementarily, Hardcastle et al. (2011) perspective on Community Practice highlights how local actors mobilize resources, build adaptive capacities, and negotiate policies to sustain livelihoods under conditions of socio- economic transformation.



Figure 8: Labor practices in Mang Thít brick and pottery village, encompassing the entire process from clay preparation and molding to stacking, firing, and transportation. These images illustrate the cooperative rhythm and intergenerational transmission of artisanal skills.

(Source: Researcher, 2024)

Knowledge of Mang Thít's craft was completely transmitted through ritual procedures, occupational language and hands-on work. These procedures are completely rooted in day-to-day life, also been developed across generations. Moreover, there are significant changes in urbanisation. In today's modernised world, non-fired materials and low- smoke kilns, along with strong digital marketing technologies strategies, have restructured the knowledge of crafts. Whereas, households have also started the yield on decorative pottery, bonsai planters, and heritage souvenirs, while also experimenting with tourism such as kiln tours and pottery workshops. These results state that conventional knowledge was not constant; it can be changed and reshaped through community interaction and engagement with external markets and technologies. Moreover, with these new technological implications, Mang Thít faces more structural difficulties. The government said to close the traditional kilns because of smoke emissions and clay mining. The younger generations are not interested to learn these craft works because of lower pay and lack of reputation. Development of these craftworks became more complicated because of the poor economic environment and heritage practices. Lastly, climate change, salinity, and depletion of clay deposits are long-term risks for the production. For these difficulties, the modern techniques should be integrated with traditional knowledge and multi-level governance initiatives to strengthen the craftworks. Strategic directions for securing Mang Thít's future are multifaceted. Strengthening apprenticeship systems and hybrid developing models combine family-based instruction with formal education which could preserve the tacit craft knowledge by preparing younger generations with modern technological skills. Combining the craft village into national and international platforms such as OCOP programme, heritage tourism programme and potential recognition within ASEAN or UNESCO cultural heritage networks would strengthen its in long-term resilience. The important factor is the ecological conscious planning relocates high emission kilns, creates sustainable craft zones, preserves riverside heritage landscapes and supports both ecotourism and climate adaptation. This method aligns with the principles of sustainable rural development (Chambers & Conway, 1992) and heritage governance frameworks, by positioning Mang Thít within both national and global initiatives.



Figure 9: The images depict the Red Brick & Pottery – Green Economy Festival in Vinh Long (2023–2024), a key cultural-economic event highlighting the heritage of Mang Thít. Featured are the Red Pottery Art Street, exhibition spaces, and a Co Chien floating market re-enactment, reflecting efforts to link heritage preservation, cultural tourism, and green economy within a Community of Practice (CoP).

(Source: Researcher, 2024)

These directions are compared by both shared and distinctive features. This is the same as the community in Gujarat, India. There is a transfer of kinship-based knowledge in Mang Thít (Sikdar, 2015). In contrast, Noricum's ceramic workshops in Austria (Auer, 2018) illustrate the importance of small-scale artisan continuity. Mang Thít's integration of ecological, social and policy shifts have shaped its riverine ecology, evolving social networks and state-led policies into production pathways. These interwoven dynamic make Mang Thít as a modern living community of practice with relevance for global sustainability and cultural preservation. Wenger's (1998) reinforces the conception in community of practice as an evolving ecosystem and aligns with Hardcastle's (2011) argument on empowerment and resilience. Significantly, it states that traditional craft village can improve globalization support by a synergy of local knowledge, technological innovation, community agency and enhances policy networks. Mang Thít stands as the living laboratory where the "soul of the craft" ensures sustainable community development.

This study on the brick and pottery kilns of Mang Thít, Vinh Long, demonstrates that traditional craft villages should not be understood merely as sites of material production but as socio-cultural ecosystems where knowledge, space, and community practices are continuously reproduced and adapted. By applying the frameworks of Local Knowledge (Geertz, 1983) and Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998; Hardcastle, 2011), the research clarifies how indigenous knowledge, spatial organisation, and social networks together sustain artisanal traditions while enabling adaptive responses to external pressures. There are around four important inventions that have been developed. First, Mang Thít kilns explains the six stages of development in the history of the 18th century to the conventional reorientation, emphasising how the local communities experienced the periods of disruption and reform. The production of village spaces initiates the environmental knowledge in the strategic placement of riverside kilns, courtyard orientations and the combination of both home and work areas. This study reveals that traditional knowledge is culturally developed in the landscape, which is explained as the second invention. Third, the social practice network illustrates Mang Thít as a living CoP, where tacit skills are transmitted through kinship, apprenticeship, and collective labour, while evolving toward more open and cooperative models in response to market change. Finally, on the point of urbanisation, Mang Thít plays a major role in diversifying the products of CoP, engaging in cultural tourism, and negotiating policies, though challenges such as environmental pressure and intergenerational gaps remain. Theoretically, this research extends the CoP framework by incorporating spatial, ecological, and ritual dimensions into the analysis of craft communities. Practically, it suggests that the sustainable future of Mang Thít depends on reinforcing family-based apprenticeship, integrating craft heritage into cultural tourism and OCOP programs, and adopting cleaner production technologies. Overall, Mang Thít exemplifies how traditional craft villages can operate as resilient cultural-technical ecosystems, offering valuable insights into sustainable development, cultural continuity, and adaptive innovation in the Mekong Delta and beyond.

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