The Relationship between Temple Public Spaces and Surrounding Communities: The Case of Songkhla Municipality

ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพื้นที่สาธารณะวัดกับชุมชนโดยรอบ: กรณีเทศบาลนครสงขลา

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to investigate the roles of public spaces in temples in Songkhla Municipality in terms of relationships and utilization by the communities in the context of Songkhla society. The research was conducted by mixed-method and qualitative methodologies through in-depth interviews with community leaders, community representatives, temple abbots, and monk representatives from 18 temples, as well as entrepreneurs and citizens who used these public spaces. The samples of these populations were selected using purposive sampling. Physical data, locations, types, and periods of activities were collected and analyzed in the study. The results revealed that the temple public spaces serve important roles for the community. These public spaces are used

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for various activities for various periods of time. They are particularly used for physical, social, and commercial purposes, fostering relationships between the temples and the communities in three ways. Their sheer physical characteristic means that each space is available for people gatherings, establishing relationships with a link to their mental dimension. The spaces are also used for economic purposes. However, it was found that some of the temple spaces have been misused by the communities involved, a reflection of the shortcomings of policies designated by government agencies to improve quality of citizens' life. It could be concluded that the cooperation among the related government offices, the temples and the communities can be served as a guideline to reduce future problems.

Keywords: public space, neighborhood concept, temple and communities, Songkhla

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อค้นหาบทบาทพื้นที่ว่างสาธารณะของวัดในเทศบาลนครสงขลาว่า มีความสัมพันธ์กับการใช้งานของชุมชนอย่างไรในบริบทสังคมไทย โดยดำเนินการวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน ระหว่างการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพด้วยการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกกลุ่มตัวแทนประชากร โดยมีผู้นำชุมชน กลุ่มตัวแทนชุมชน เจ้าอาวาส และตัวแทนพระสงฆ์ 18 วัด ตัวแทนผู้ประกอบการ กลุ่มตัวแทนผู้ใช้พื้นที่วัดทำกิจกรรม มีการเก็บข้อมูลด้วยการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง ร่วมกับการรวบรวมและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลกายภาพ ตำแหน่งพื้นที่รูปแบบและช่วงเวลาทำกิจกรรมจากกรณีศึกษา พบว่า พื้นที่ว่างสาธารณะในวัดมีบทบาทเป็นพื้นที่บริการชุมชน การใช้พื้นที่ทำกิจกรรมเกิดขึ้นได้หลายรูปแบบตามช่วงเวลา โดยมีการใช้พื้นที่เขตธรณีสงฆ์เป็นพื้นที่หลากหลายด้านพร้อมกัน ได้แก่ ด้านกายภาพ ด้านสังคม

ด้านพาณิชยกรรม และเป็นกลไกสร้างความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างวัดและชุมชน ที่สามารถอธิบายความเชื่อมโยงพื้นที่ได้ 3 ลักษณะ คือ มิติทางกายภาพ เป็นพื้นที่รองรับกิจกรรมการพบปะ สร้างความสัมพันธ์ของกลุ่มคนในชุมชน เชื่อมต่อไปสู่การเกิดมิติทางจิตใจ และนำพื้นที่ไปขยายผลให้เกิดมิติทางเศรษฐกิจ ข้อค้นพบสำคัญในการวิจัย คือ การเปิดพื้นที่ให้ชุมชนเข้ามาใช้ประโยชน์หรือทำกิจกรรมในวัดอย่างผิดวัตถุประสงค์ เป็นปัญหาเชิงสังคมที่สะท้อนถึงนโยบายการพัฒนาคุณภาพชีวิตของประชาชนจากหน่วยงานภาครัฐ การขับเคลื่อนร่วมกันระหว่างภาครัฐ ชุมชน และวัด จึงเป็นแนวทางที่ควรมีการนำมาพิจารณาและปฏิบัติร่วมกัน เพื่อแก้ปัญหาอย่างเป็นรูปธรรมในอนาคต

คำสำคัญ: พื้นที่ว่างสาธารณะ แนวคิดชุมชนละแวกบ้าน วัดและชุมชนสงขลา

Introduction

A public space is an open social space for various activities, its focus being usefulness and providing a good quality of life for all types and ages of people. Public spaces are usually built by government organizations. In terms of the physical dimension of a city, a public space is considered an independently accessible space for recreational and relaxing activities and other events (Holdsworth, 2005). However, in terms of the social dimension of a city, a public space serves as an intermediary location for people to gather for meetings and activities (Chaijan & Laiprakob, 2016). It also facilitates interactions among people in a community, which can reflect the community's identity through different types of activities.

Songkhla is a provincial capital in southern Thailand. Nowadays, it is divided into three parts: 1) Hua Khao Dang, 2) Laem Son, and 3) Bo Yang or Songkhla Municipality. Since 1932, it has

emerged to become a livable and economically growing city, together with Hat Yai, according to the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (2021). Therefore, a large number of people from nearby districts and other regions have migrated to Songkhla Municipality, causing some problems for residential areas (Chiniratna et al., 2004). In the meantime, the train route between Mueang Songkhla and Hat Yai has been discontinued. Consequently, some government areas belonging to the State Railway of Thailand have become settled and some people have rented lots around temples, living in slum-like conditions. In these areas, there are no public spaces for community members to perform public activities.

Although many people from other regions have migrated to Mueang Songkhla, their way of life remains based on Thai tradition which considers temples as centers of communities for a variety of activities. These public spaces are still located in temples and they can be analyzed in physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions.

Therefore, given the need to use space in areas where there was a shortage of physical space, to support community activities the uses of temple public spaces in Songkhla Municipality were investigated. The data were collected by surveying the physical spaces for environmental data as well as interviews and observations for data on emotions and opinions. In addition, the circumstances were described and synthesized for the context of temple public space uses surrounding the communities.

Objective

To study the relationship between the temple areas and the surrounding communities in Songkhla Municipality

Literature Review

Public space is an important element of a city structure; it is space which everyone can access independently. Each location also has a role in providing community services. The literature review explores important concepts related to the roles of public spaces in temples. These are (1) as a public space, (2) as a neighborhood concept, and (3) temple zoning.

1. Public Space

A public space in a city is linked to relationships between a space and people' s activities, allocated and taken care by a government organization. Additionally, a public space in a community is usually small and used for various activities at the same time.

In terms of definitions of public space, the social relationships between public space and people have been emphasized. Referring to a Western understanding, a public space is a place where people gather and can access and mutually perform their activities daily or occasionally without requesting or requiring government permission. Piromruen (2013) additionally states that people can use a public space independently without limitations and payments. Moreover, Natewutthikun (2007, as cited in Natewutthikun, 2014: 12) suggests that to build a public space successfully requires three kinds of integration: physical, economic, and social. Chowana and Jiraprasertkul (2017) state that the close relationships of a public space between physical and social dimensions determine its identity.

However, a study of spaces and places by Suwatcharapinun and Danhongmangkorn (2019) interestingly proposed the view that spaces can be imaginative as well as physical and linked to the environment. These become factors influencing people's daily routines which are different according to situations and activities. This study is

relevant to the concept of the production of space by Henri Lefebvre (1998, as cited in Supanan, 2011). Spaces are not only concrete, but they are also changeable and flexible for various social activities and varying routines. Moreover, spaces are related to economy, politics, and culture and can be adjusted to any circumstance. These are called ' social spaces'. The main dimensions in the production of spaces contain (1) spatial practices or perceived spaces which are physical, (2) representations of spaces or conceived spaces that are abstract based on perception, interpretation, and, and (3) spaces of representations or lived spaces which are combinations between physical and mental spaces (Lefebvre, 1991, as cited in Supanan, 2011).

For a public space in a Western understanding, Atiphothi (2005) and Phaksukcharoen (2008, as cited in Orantatthanamanee, 2014) stated that a public space is built by natural elements, based on lifestyles, rules, and regulations for physical, economic, social, and cultural living. It is focused on utilization rather than a nice and orderly management. These spaces are opposite to spaces in Thai society, where public spaces are always focused on in terms of their neatness and tidiness, thus resulting in losses of original natural spaces (Supanan, 2011). Therefore, a public space in a Western understanding does not emphasize tradition, but the social and cultural beliefs which are linked to groups of people. Thai- style public spaces have for centuries been present in temples, schools, forests, or even ritual spaces (Wanniphodom, 1997, as cited in Orantatthanamanee, 2014).

In terms of public spaces in Thai society, Pornsiriphong and Sasiwongsaroj (2004) suggested that temples encourage networking and social and environmental space management. Normally many activities are held around and in the temple areas. In fact, in the past, temples not only had roles in education and dharma practices but also

acted as meeting points for communities, traditional events, and spiritual leaders for dharma (Ngamwitthayapong et al., 2016).

A public space is thus a central space linked to interactions of people. It can be accessed by people independently. A good public space should be considered for integration of activities to respond to physical, economic, and social uses, as mentioned in a Western understanding. In contrast, a public space in a Thai understanding contains a mixture of belief and rituals in its utilization. In consequence, public spaces in Thai society include relationships between physical, social, and mental dimensions.

2. The Neighborhoods

The neighborhood is a way to understand the development of a community, focused on the spatial relationships of people in terms of their inter-related daily activities in order to strengthen their community.

Kulchon (2022) proposed this concept as a way to consider managing residential areas. Public buildings, such as temples, kindergarten schools, playgrounds, shops, etc., should be included in the center of each community no more than 400 meters of walking distance from every house. Sukolratthanamathe (2015) indicated that public spaces and public buildings of each community are considered elements of the physical environment which can create social interactions and a community's identity. These also lead to people's attachment to a place. In addition, Phasuthip (2009) mentioned that physical factors supporting people to do activities include safety, symbolic ownership, convenience, and physical comfort. Jacobs (1961) also indicated that neighborhood public spaces should encourage people to continually meet and have interactions with one another in daily life. This can result in each community's identity and

relationships being different, depending on physical and social conditions (Phaksukcharoen, 2008).

According to these concepts, the neighborhood is focused on walking so that people can meet and perform their activities together easily, which can thus increase community strength. In Thai society, temples and schools are considered social and religious centers to which people can easily walk in 400 meters.

3. Temple Zoning

Jirathadsanakul (2000) studied Thai Buddhist places and revealed the relationships between temples and communities. Temples are community centers and serve as one important unit of Thai society and links to people's relationships in communities. Space in temples is divided into three zones: a semi-public zone (ritual zone), a private zone (monk zone), and a public zone. The public zone can be located on the left or right side, or at the back of a temple, allowing for relaxation, education, or its rental for commercial purposes. These roles indicate that apart from its utilization for multi-purpose activities, a public space in a temple can be used to hold social activities and commercial activities when there are some occasions or events in a temple.

According to Nakwatchara (1982), the open spaces in a temple compound serve three purposes.

1) Physically, the public space in a temple can be used for recreation, relaxation, and sports. These uses can be allocated in a spacious temple. Nowadays, some temples are zoned for monthly rental parking lots or some buildings for a public health center, which means that less space is available for *ad hoc* public use.

2) Economically, temple space can be utilized commercially by renting out lots to generate income for the temple, or temporary rental areas for stands to sell things or allow for the playing of games when there are events. However, physical problems can be raised by this purpose due to a temple' s beauty being obscured, environmental damage from cutting down trees or leaving huge amounts of garbage and trash which have to be picked up.

3) Socially, a temple can house educational activities such as museums and libraries for monks and people. It is advantageous to a temple if an area for this purpose is well laid out.

Jirathadsanakul (2000) divides the area of a temple from an architectural perspective, identifying the appropriate uses for activities according to the different zones of the temple. However, Nakwatchara (1982) advocates zoning spaces according to the purposes of its activities.

The open area in a temple becomes a link to each zone. A semi-public zone (ritual zone) serves as a community service area for people integrating physical, economic, and social dimensions. Finally, temple zoning is based on past customs and traditions. Clearly marking zones for each purpose, encourages people to visit.

Following this literature review, the issue of temple public spaces in the communities in Songkhla Municipality, which has been less researched, was explored and the findings analyzed based on the theory of space by Henri Lefebvre and the neighborhood concept.

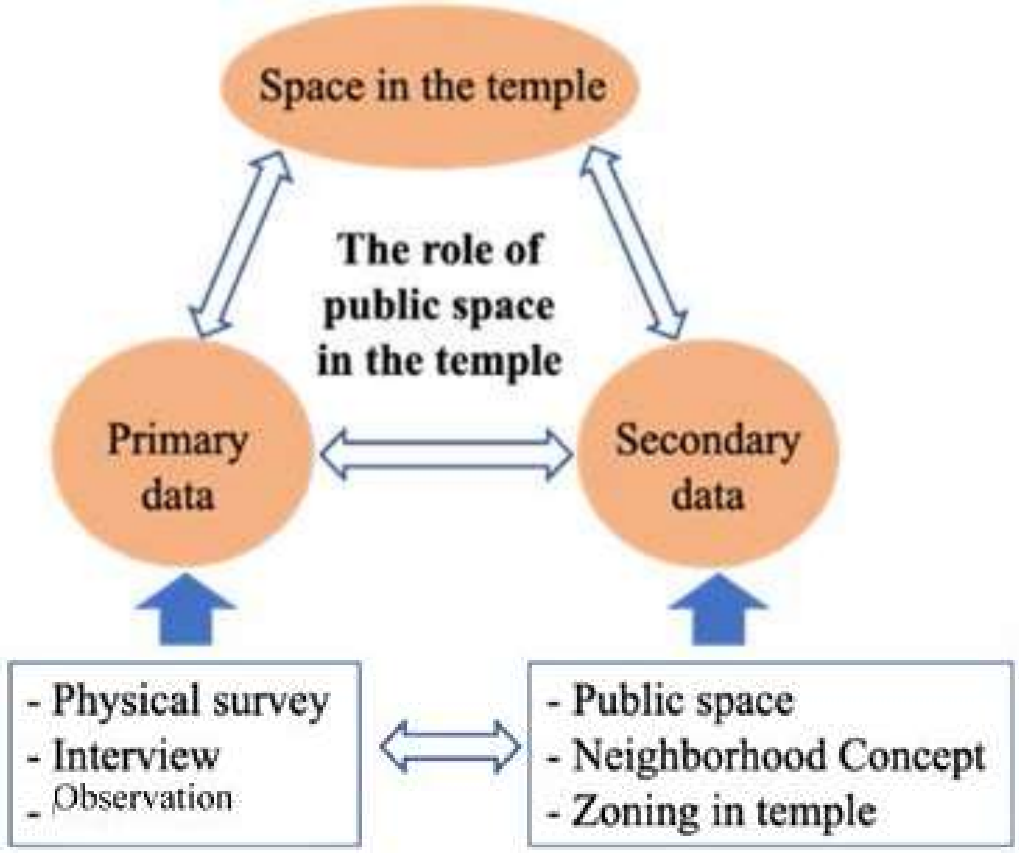
Research Methodology

The research methodology was a combination of qualitative research in the form of in- depth interviews and a physical survey. The contrast between empty public spaces and the

neighborhood concept was employed as the main analytical concept to reveal the characteristics of the temple public spaces and types of activities held by the surrounding communities. The sample population consists of monks, and normal people, laywomen as well as laymen. The samples included (1) 18 people living in their community within a walking radius of no more than 400 meters who were aged 18 years or older and had been living there for more than six months, (2) 36 temple abbots and monks, 3) seven entrepreneurs, selected by purposive sampling, in Pho Pathumma Temple, Sala Hua Yang Temple, Chaeng Temple, Uthai Tharam Temple, Sai Ngam Temple, Chai Mongkol Temple, and Hua Pom Nok Temple, and (4) 18 citizens who used the temple areas for activities, selected by accidental sampling in order to receive direct information. Non-participant observation was also employed in the study to collect some data.

In the field survey, physical data for the 18 temples were gathered using Google Earth Pro, identifying temple locations and their 400- meter walking radius. The physical primary data contained locations, activity types, and periods of time. The collected primary data were correlated to the secondary data including concepts, related theories, and previous studies related to public spaces. To discuss the uses of temple public space surrounding the communities in Songkhla Municipality, the data were analyzed by descriptive statistics according to the research objective.

Figure 1
Research Framework



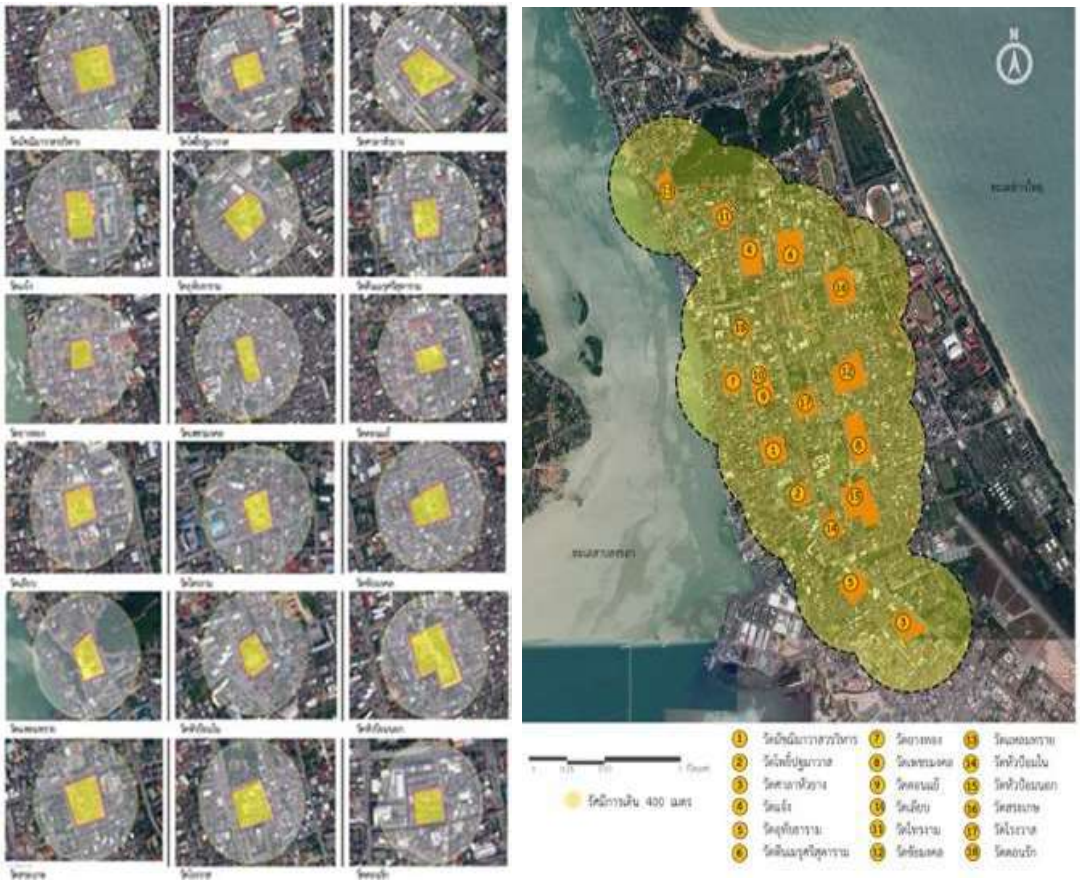
Note. A research framework by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam

There are 18 temples in Songhla Municipality. In this study, the public spaces of the temples in Songkhla Municipality were focused on by consideration of a 400-meter walking distance from each temple in each community. Each temple was set as the center of each community, with its radius of walking distance based on the neighborhood concept. Sometimes the radius to access each temple covered more than one community, thus the people in each community had a choice of temples which they could select from.

The 18 temples were Laem Sai Temple, Sai Ngam Temple, Chaeng Temple, Tinmaru Temple, Don Rak Temple, Saket Temple, Chai Mongkol Temple, Hua Pom Nok Temple, Hua Pom Nai Temple, Uthai Tharam Temple, Pho Pathumma Temple, Matchimawat Temple, Don Yae Temple, Liab Temple, Yang Thong Temple, Rong Wat Temple, Sala Hua Yang Temple, and Phet Mongkol Temple (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Map of the Locations of Temples within a Walking Radius of Not More Than 400 Meters



Note. Reprint from Google Earth Pro (2021) Retrieved November 13, 2021

Findings

In the study of the public spaces in the temples, the physical data of activities held in the public spaces were the main instrument. The results are as follows.

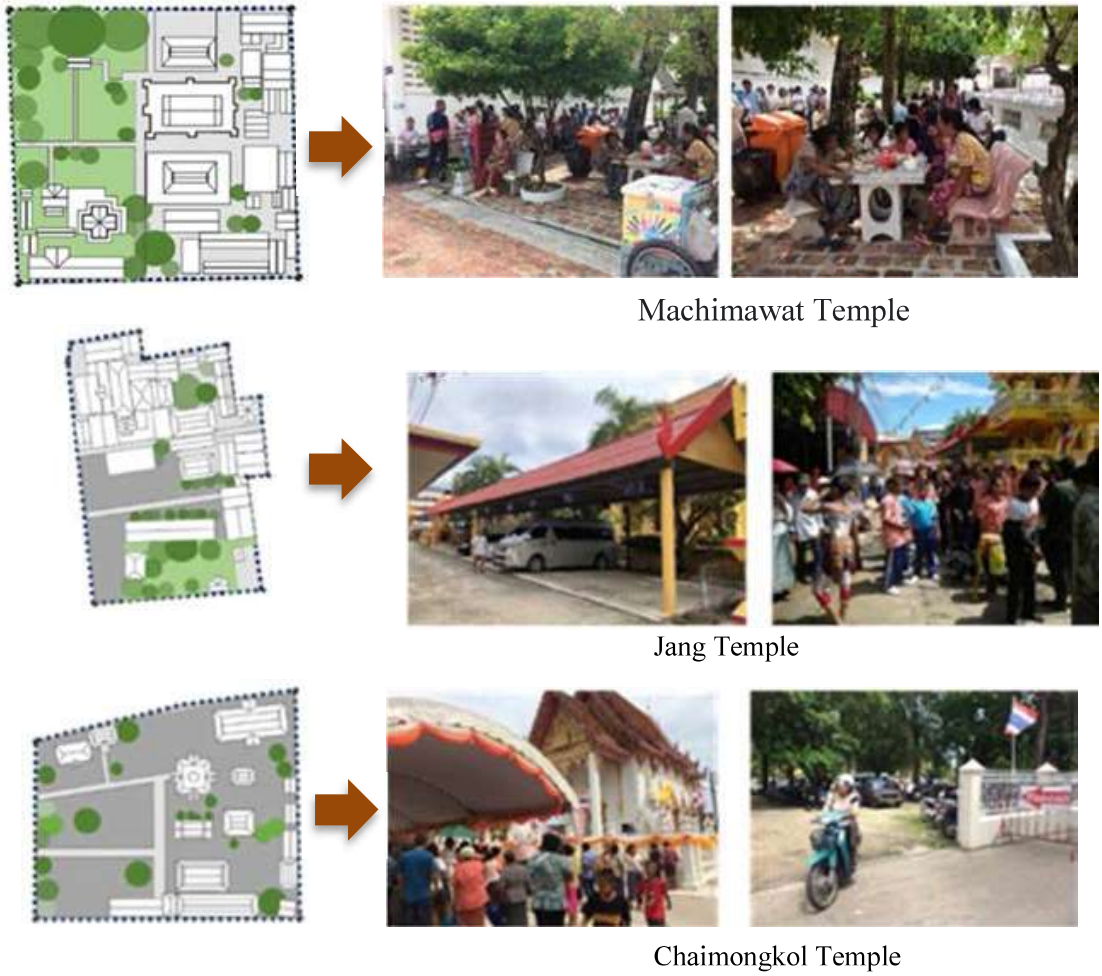
1. The Relationships Between the Temples and the Surrounding Communities

In Songkhla Municipality, some residences were built in slums due to migration of people from nearby districts and other regions. Limited physical space in the slums was the main cause for the lack of public spaces, so spaces in temples were advertised and linked so that relationships between the temples and the surrounding communities could take place.

Three factors affected temple selection: (1) Personal relationships between monks and people and purposes of going to a temple such as relaxation, exercise, as well as assisting the temple by providing food, cleaning toilets, or asking monks to do horoscopes. (2) Merit-making opportunities at a temple holding an ancestors' ashes. Although a temple might be located outside the community where the descendants lived, they went to make merit at the temple where their accessors' bones are kept (the leader of Wat Sai Ngam Community). (3) Geographic proximity: a temple's location and distance affected people's decisions. They chose a temple near their house so that they could just walk to do activities there (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Illustrations of Public Temple Space During the Kathin Festival



Note. An original photograph by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam, November 19, 2018

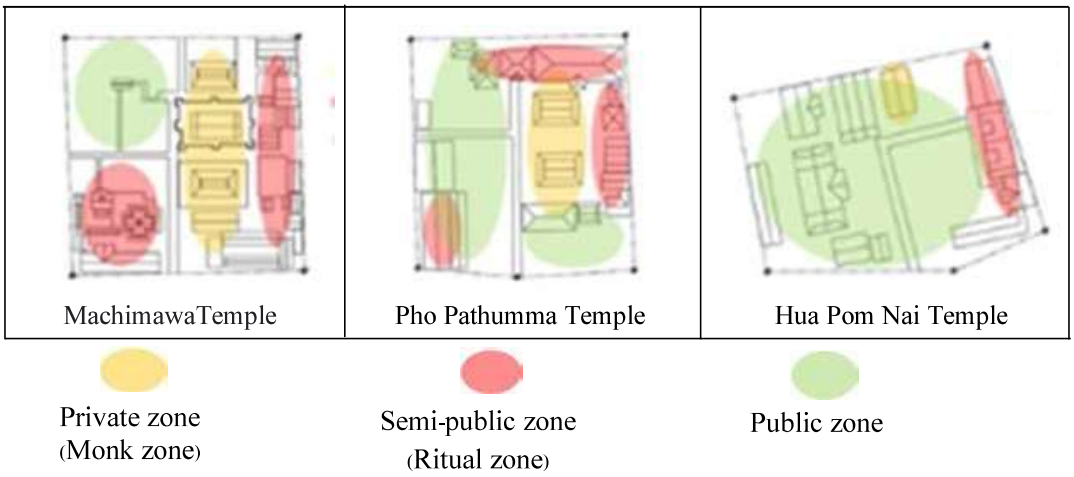
2. Temple Zoning

Matchimawat Temple, Pho Pathumma Temple, and Hua Pom Nai Temple are zoned according to their layouts and customs. Their semi-public zones (ritual zones), including meeting hall, ritual pavilion, and monk's houses, were clearly organized, as they had

been in the past. (Jirathadsanakul, 2000) with no new buildings. Their public zones are designed for traditional occasions and relaxation. Orderly zoning reflects clearness of space utilization, so Dharma studies and monk privacy were not interrupted. For these reasons, the physical characteristics of orderly and proportional zoning could help to promote a better environment and landscapes in the temples for cleanliness, peacefulness, and suitability for space utilization without disturbance to Dharma studies and monks' privacy (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Temple Zoning Structured Like a Temple in the Past



Note. An original map by Nattaneeporn Noisangiame

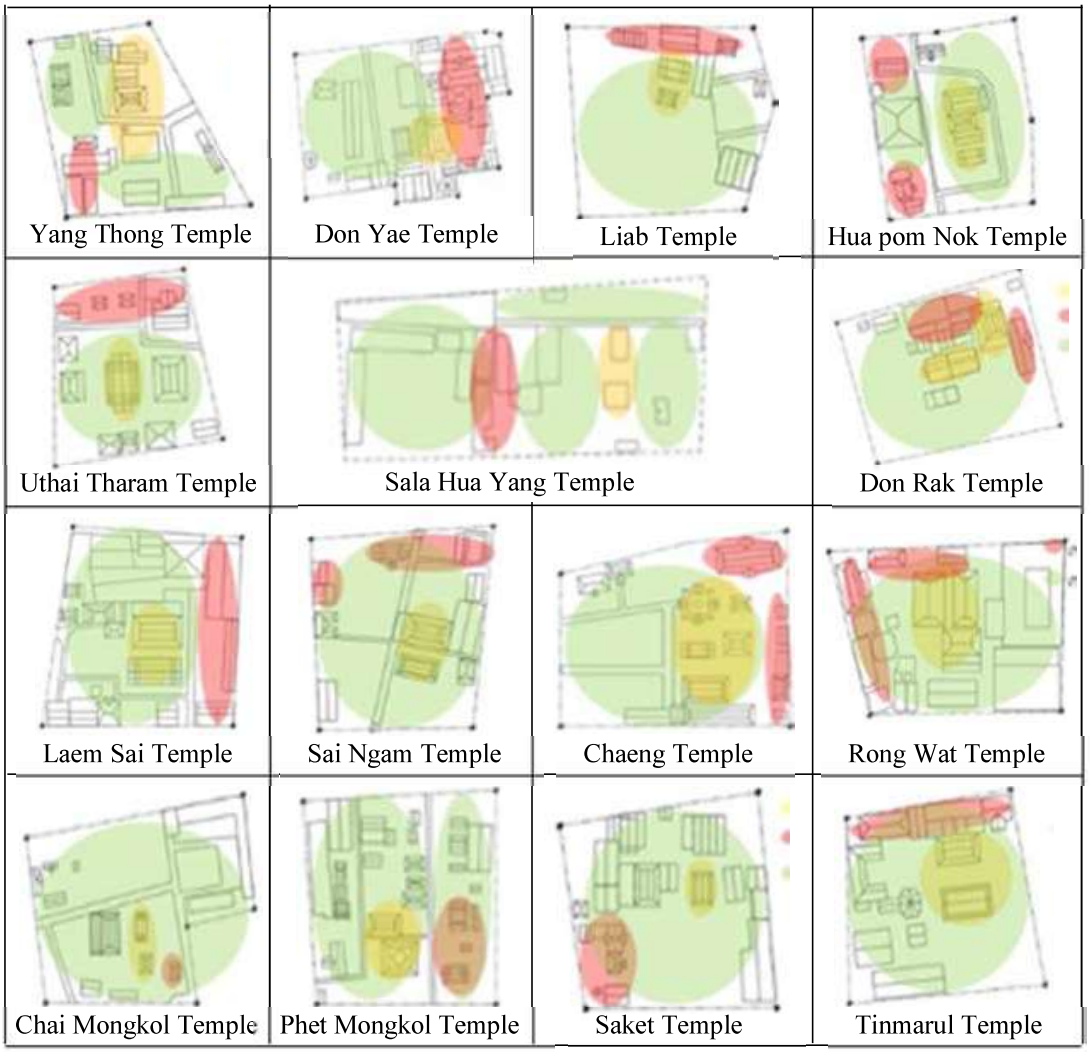
Monks require peacefulness for their practice. Some people came to talk to monks and gossip about other people. Those monks acknowledged that some information was not related to monks' duties. Zoning supported monk privacy (a monk representative, 2019).

Fifteen temples were not clearly zoned for utilization, so activity spaces in the temples always overlapped: Yang Thong Temple, Don Yae Temple, Liab Temple, Hua Pom Nok Temple, Uthai Tharam

Temple, Sala Hua Yang Temple, Don Rak Temple, Laem Sai Temple, Sai Ngam Temple, Chaeng Temple, Rong Wat Temple, Chai Mongkol Temple, Phet Mongkol Temple, Saket Temple, and Tinmaru Temple, (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Temples with Activities in Overlapping Zones



Note. An original map by Nattaneeporn Noisangiame

In addition, these temples were developed to support new activities by constructing some buildings whose proportions were

not harmony with existing buildings. This resulted in unlivable temples, incompatibility with the environment and landscapes, and unattractiveness to conduct activities in those temples.

3. Activity Types and Periods of Public Space Utilization

The research results revealed that periods of time to use the public spaces were related to types of activities and purposes of visiting temples. The researcher was told that people who visited the temples in the morning had closer relationships with the monks since they provided food and helped the monks do some chores and duties. These people can be called Buddhist laymen and women. They usually stayed in spaces under trees in the temples all day. Another group were elderly people who lived around the temples. They usually met their friends in the late afternoon under trees in the temples and they often brought their grandchildren to play around in the free spaces in the temples every day (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Examples of Physical, Relaxation, and Social Activities in Temples' Public Spaces



Note. An original photograph by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam, September 12, 2018

Another group of elderly people prayed and practiced Dharma in the halls in the evening. Some people visited temples to have their horoscopes read, sometimes in monks' houses or under trees in the temples. For temples in which schools were located, parents and drivers of school vans and buses usually waited for their students in the open spaces in the provided parking lots.

Additionally, some people temporarily used public spaces commercially and rent-free, both in and outside the temples, when the school-day finished. This use could only take place in the temples where schools were located.

Finally, some people parked their cars in temple public spaces. Some temples had parking lots with monthly payment plans, while others were free. In these latter cases owners parked their cars at their own risk. The temples could not be held responsible for any car damage and loss, even if the owners needed to ask permission from these temple abbots before parking their cars.

4. Roles of Public Spaces in Temples

The findings showed that the public spaces in the temples were still utilized in the same way as in the past. However, the public spaces in the temples had decreased due to new buildings and adjusted utilization to support activities for city people. In the 18 temples, three dimensions of the changing role of public temple spaces were identified:

1) Public spaces in the temples were the primary places for people in the communities to gather for activities.

They also had another role in new utilization, namely parking lots to facilitate people who visited the temples. There were three types of parking lots: (1) monthly payment for parking rental, (2) free parking lots with limited duration depending on the opening and closing times

of the temple gates. (3) free parking lots for student activities and vehicles waiting for students at the temples where the schools were located. In fact, parking lots were necessary to facilitate people. If they had to park their cars far away from the temple, they would not visit the temples (a monk representative, 2019).

2) In terms of economics, temple public space supported people with low incomes. The findings indicate that there are two different types of economic utilization of temple public space. First, in the temples with schools, the public spaces in front of the schools are employed for commercial activities when the school-day is finished. Second, the large public spaces were occasionally used for traditional activities, such as festivals and large-scale ceremonies. These results reflected that the economic role of the public spaces in the temples cannot occur independently. Their role depended on other types of activities. However, requirements for periods of public space utilization in the temples were organized in the same way. That is, periods of time to use the public spaces for any activity were determined by the opening and closing times of the temple gates.

3) For the social dimension, the public spaces had important roles as linkages in relationships between monks and communities, and for relationships among people who used these public spaces to relax, converse, and exchange life stories. Besides, these public spaces had roles in linking beliefs and mental dispositions and attitudes. Monks also acted as intermediaries to link these things through Buddhist rituals. These social activities clearly could not be held unless there are public spaces (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Illustrations of the Three Dimensions of Public Temple Space Use: Physical, Economic, and Social



Note. An original photograph by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam, November 22, 2019

Discussion

The findings of this study relate to existing research as follows:

1. Social Interaction

This study shows that temple spaces for interaction provide places for linkages between individual relationships and social relationships through activities and rituals. These spaces are also used by people from nearby communities to gather for conversations or to relax. Thus, temple public spaces are not only physical areas, but also social areas. Data from the study indicated that the public spaces in the temples were important to the communities since they were peoples' routine areas, and their activities showed regular ocurrences over spaces and times.

These results are important for city designers. Jan Gehl (2013) and Orantatthanamanee (2014) stated that public spaces were valuable areas for daily life and interactions among a variety of people. Jacobs (1961) and Phaksukcharoen (2008) also indicated that a public space should be near enough to the people so that they can easily meet and interact with each other in their daily lives. Lefebvre (1991) stated that spaces are not built by themsleves, but are constructed socially (Lefebvre, 1991 as cited in Supanan, 2011).

Public spaces in temples provide intermediaries for meeting points, religious ritual spaces, or ritual spaces for the performance of Buddhist and other rituals. These results agree with Orantatthanamanee's (2014) research results and Gehl (2013), who proposed a connection between open public spaces and people's needs for activities. Thus, public spaces help create relationships among people in the communities, and accordingly enhance the strength of communities.

2. Utilization

Temple public spaces are used for various and overlapping activities. Public spaces are not only physical centers for activities in the communities, but also social centers with their own 'hidden' cultures. These findings are confirmed by Wanniphodom (1997, as cited in Orantatthanamanee, 2014).

In fact, people in surrounding communities only focused on physical spaces for their activities. They still lacked an awareness for a sense of special belonging, which was considered important for relationships between the communities and the temples. The people only emphasized the use of these spaces without an awareness of the environment; that is, they lacked a sense of place. Even though the temple spaces were used to support people's social interaction, they did not feel engagement with these spaces. The reason obtained from the conversations with the people in the communities was that most of them were not native to the communities. They moved there to do jobs for their living. During some important festivals or long holidays, they went back to their hometowns. Therefore, no awareness of a sense of belonging resulted in no relationships of value between the communities and the environment. These findings are in line with a study by Sangsehanat (2018), who indicated that faced with people's routines in cities led to no social awareness. However, the locations of the temples were around the communities to be reached by walking, so that people in the communities could do their activities in any temple (Suwatcharapinan & Danhongmangkorn 2019). Consequently, the locations of the temples were related to a sense of belonging.

According to the findings of choosing a habitual temple for the families of people migrating to live in Songkhla Municipality for their jobs but going back to their hometown during festivals, it could

reflect their daily routines that they did not have the feeling of harmony with the new environment. They needed time to adjust, to engage with and feel to be part of the communities (Lefebvre, 1991, as cited in Suwatcharapinan & Danhongmangkorn, 2019).

Sometimes a lack of clarity in zoning between a semi-public zone (ritual zone), a private zone (monk zone), and public zone caused an overlap in the use of space. Some activities interrupted the peace and privacy of monks. Temple zoning has a role in the social connection of people in the communities doing activities. These results are related to some problem mentioned above by Jirathadsanakul (2000) and Nakaphanaumphai (2018) . They stated that clear temple zoning attracted people to do activities. If temple zoning is not clear, disturbance and noise affect monks' duties. In addition, public spaces in Thai society are commonly judged in terms of neatness and tidiness, resulting in the loss of originally natural spaces.

In conclusion, a public space is not only a physical space, but also a social space in which relationships are formed between a temple and members of a community through various activities.

3. Economy

The temples earned some income from the rental of buildings. In addition, some open spaces were developed as parking lots with monthly payments or free of charge in the temples. These developments caused changes in temple landscapes, such as the cutting down of some big trees which previously gave shades in the temples. In addition, temporary economic activities involving stands for selling things during temple events and other activities such as activities after schools finished. These types of utilization occur during set time periods.

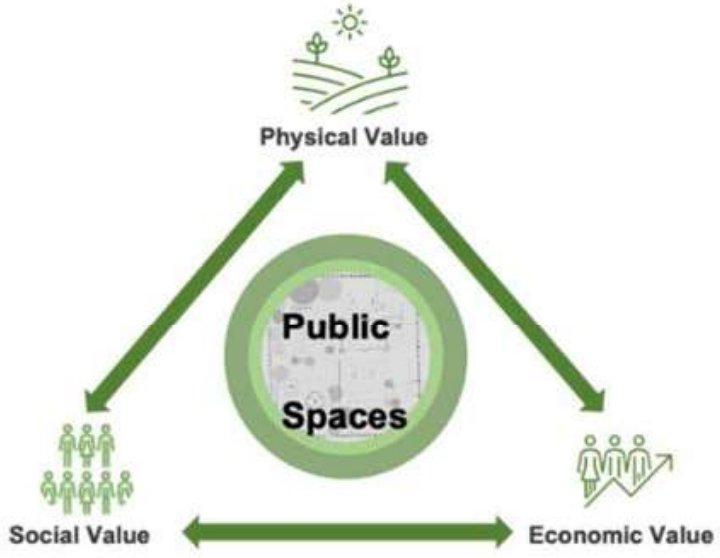
Economic activities were mainly in the form of food stalls when schools finished. The entrepreneurs were both people from local

communities and outside people. This activity only happened in the temples with schools. Therefore, the social relationships occurred temporarily during meetings, integration, and the exchange of news. In contrast, this economic role was not found to encourage their relationships or build obvious social relationships between people in the communities and outside people.

In conclusion, three characteristics dominated the roles of public spaces in the selected temples. A physical dimension covered the location and types of activities. A social dimension linked to beliefs, faith, and attitudes, and an economic dimension was used to express the value generated through the physical location. Consequently, these three characteristics were all linked together (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Relationship of Three Characteristics of Public Spaces in the Temple (Physical, Economic, and Social Dimensions)



Note. An original diagram by Nattaneeporn Noisangiam

Recommendations

This article showed the uses of temple public spaces by describing their roles physically, socially, and economically. It discussed the link between new people who migrated to live in the communities for their jobs and temple space use for their daily routines. These findings revealed the lack of a sense of belonging.

Recommendations are as follows:

Where temple spaces were not clearly zoned, an overlap of use for different activities occurred. Temple spaces should be clearly zoned to avoid an overlap of zones serving different activities or purposes.

Songkhla Municipality should increase the amount of public spaces by making available unused land for the benefit of the local communities, and the findings of this research can be considered a guideline to develop such spaces appropriately.

In addition, temple public spaces which are open for people to use or perform their activities can cause some problems such as robbery of temple items, or alcohol and drug use, and other illegal activities. The utilization in such illegal ways poses problems for poses problems for the temples and the communities. Hence, government organizations should cooperate with temples and communities to discover suitable solutions to the problems. The cooperation between three sectors can be a guideline to reduce problems in the future.

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