

Mekong Riverfront Cultural Public Spaces in Nakhon Phanom City, Thailand

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Received: August 18, 2024

Revised: January 13, 2025

Accepted: April 25, 2025

Abstract

This study explores the cultural public spaces of Nakhon Phanom city, examining the relationship between culture and public space. It encompasses physical, public, and cultural components, ethnic groups, and the significance of culture in public spaces. The analysis covers management and development, cultural changes in space management, and an examination of cultural factors influencing public spaces. The study aims to summarize the diverse characteristics of cultural public spaces in Nakhon Phanom and highlight their importance in the city. Findings indicate that the Mekong Riverfront intertwines traditional, contemporary, and mixed cultures. It features physical potential, diverse cultural activities, and distinct periods. The area has gained cultural significance through societal processes, reflecting use patterns, perception, and management. It has also undergone noticeable physical transformations over time.

Keywords: traditional popular culture, public space usage, urban space, cultural-based activities, cultural public space, development of Mekong Riverfront

Introduction

Consumerism has catalyzed the transformation of culture into a collection of commodities, fueling a dynamic force perpetually evolving under the influence of globalization. This evolution, characterized by the blending, borrowing, and inventing of cultural elements, particularly in technology, extends into public spaces, profoundly shaping usage patterns and spatial meanings.

The intricate relationship between culture and public space unfolds across physical, social, and mental dimensions, as elucidated by Lefebvre (1991). Public space, a complex amalgamation of urban areas, embodies considerations of legitimate possession, legal rights, and the representation of traditions, ethnic groups, and organizations.

A pivotal aspect of public space in culture lies in its reflection of collectively practiced human behavior, contributing to the formation of lifestyles, cultures, and dynamic environments. This observation aligns with Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1986), which explores the cognitive processes influencing changes in individual behavior, shaped by internal personal factors (P), behavioral conditions (B), and environmental conditions (E).

In examining Nakhon Phanom as a case study, public spaces along the Mekong River emerge as vibrant arenas hosting diverse cultural activities, seamlessly blending traditional and contemporary events.

Analyzing the factors and relationships between people and environmental conditions in these spaces can yield valuable insights into changes and developments in cultural public spaces (Piriyakarnnon and Thungsakul, 2021). Recent studies in Chiang Mai show that efforts to map, mobilize, and revitalize stream-based cultural capital can systematically strengthen place-based practices and programming (Suwatcharapinun et al., 2025). Additionally, border-city modernization is documented in an old trading district of Ubon Ratchathani, where Cold War-era infrastructure accelerated urban development and reconfigured everyday urban life and culture (Pronpatoom and Wang, 2022). These perspectives deepen our understanding of development dynamics and trends, offering nuanced insights for future urban planning and culture-based development.

Objectives of the Study

This article investigates the physical characteristics of public spaces in Nakhon Phanom along with various factors tied to surrounding contexts. The study delves into contextual relationships, social interactions within public spaces, and management aspects, providing insights into the cultural nature of these spaces.

The study emphasizes factors influencing the utilization of cultural public spaces, drawing upon the work of Carr et al. (1992), highlighting the significance of surrounding contexts and social relationships. Additionally, the integration of the ideas of Gehl (1987) on primary activities in public spaces and Yoshimi and Shakaigaku (1992)'s cultural space concept enhances the exploration of the multifaceted nature of these urban environments.

The analysis explores the management of culturally significant public spaces in Nakhon Phanom, considering physical relationships, environmental conditions (E), behavioral patterns, and activities. This examination sheds light on the connections between personal relations (P) and behaviors reflecting past-to-present lifestyles (B), encompassing ethnicity, culture, values, and ceremonies. The interplay between people and spaces illustrates cultural transformations and movements impacting changes in public spaces, as illustrated in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

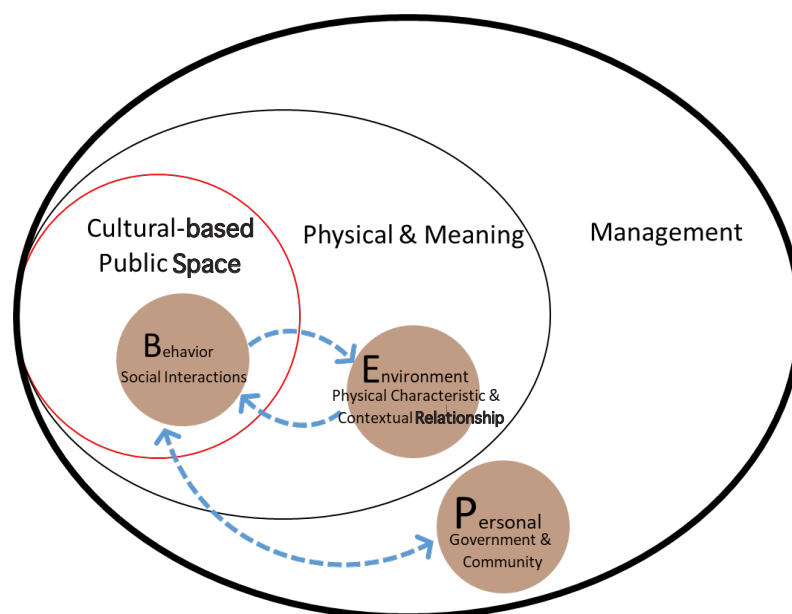


Figure 1 Guidelines for studying the cultural nature of public spaces in Nakhon Phanom

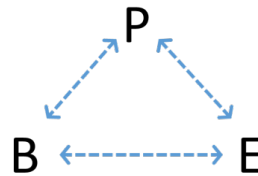


Figure 2 Relationship between personal (P), behavior (B), and environment (E)
(Albert Bandura, 1986)

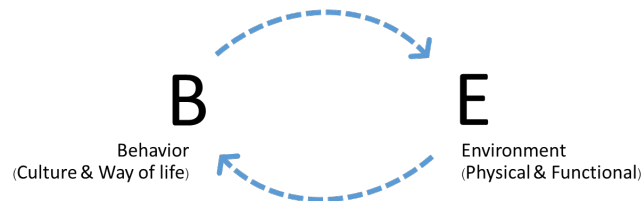


Figure 3 People, the main factor in cultural space reflecting the relationship of behavior (B) and environment (E)

Nakhon Phanom: Transition from Border Town to Economic Corridor

Nakhon Phanom Municipality, initially a quiet border town, has undergone a remarkable transformation into a significant urban center within the economic corridor of the Mekong sub-region. This evolution has been propelled by national, provincial, and local policies, particularly those associated with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Program. The momentum for city development began in 1990 with ministerial regulations and AEC policies, laying the foundation for ongoing progress in alignment with development plans since 1993. A pivotal moment in this transformation occurred with the construction of the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge in 2001. This bridge played a crucial role in facilitating trade and industry among Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, sparking extensive changes in infrastructure, public utilities, construction, and public space development. Nakhon Phanom evolved gradually from a small town into a city, positioning itself as a business and border trading area. It supported economic expansion as a declared economic corridor city in phase 2 (Economic Corridor Committee, 2015), Announcement No. 2/2015.

The city's comprehensive development plan, initiated in 2017, focused not only on strengthening infrastructure but also on harmonizing it with local cultures and traditions. Subsequent local policies in 2018 and 2019 shifted towards supporting health tourism integrated with tradition and culture. Noteworthy initiatives include meticulous development around the Mekong River and the revitalization of historic buildings, such as those surrounding the Vietnamese Memorial Clock Tower. These structures now serve as public arenas promoting traditional activities, underscoring a deliberate alignment between Nakhon Phanom's public space development and national and administrative local policies. This alignment reflects a commitment to express and preserve unique local traditions and culture amidst economic progress and urban development, as illustrated in Figure 4.

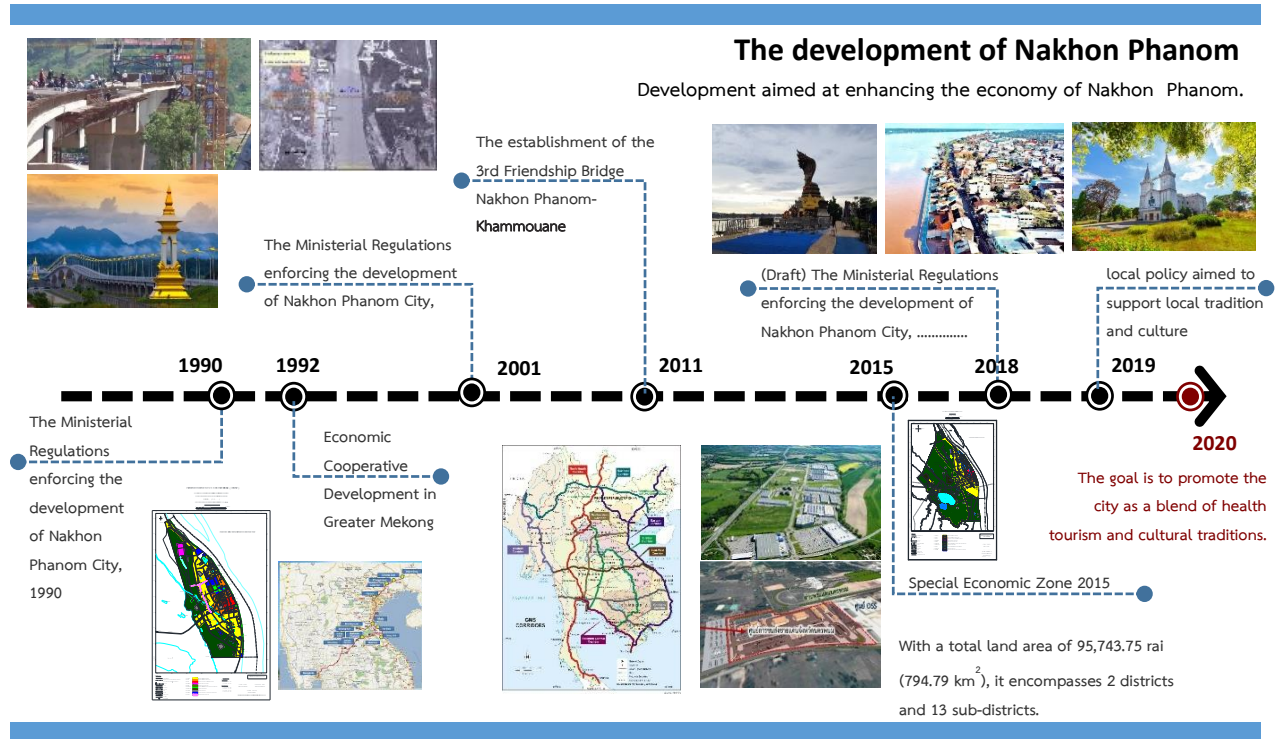


Figure 4 Development of Nakhon Phanom

Public Spaces in Nakhon Phanom

Situated along the scenic Mekong River, Nakhon Phanom features a distinctive linear urban layout that fosters a comprehensive network of public spaces strategically distributed throughout the city. As illustrated in Figure 5, these spaces play host to a myriad of activities, ranging from recreational pursuits (Figures 6,7) to cultural events, religious ceremonies (Figure 8), and official government functions (Figure 9), showcasing the community's vibrant engagement in diverse endeavors.

The city features a distinctive linear urban layout that facilitates a comprehensive network of public spaces serving diverse functions. 1) The dynamic Mekong Riverfront plays a pivotal role, serving as a focal point for both formal and informal events that invigorate the daily lives of local residents and city-organized special occasions. 2) Moreover, the city's public spaces are an expansion of traditional and religious activities, once concentrated around religious sites and the Mekong River. Spaces like Phraya Sri Sattana Khon Ratchakhiri Park (No. 17), Jan Song La Moon Plaza (No. 15), Wat Phra In Plaeng, and Wat Pho Sri (No. 33) have enriched the network dedicated to traditional and religious practices. 3) State-related activities find expression in significant buildings used as formal venues, while the provincial sports field (No. 6) and the R.9 Royal Garden (No. 1) host festivals and ceremonies. These spaces have evolved over time, witnessing a shift from internal to external areas, exemplified by the relocation of events like the Loy Krathong festival and New Year's celebrations to the Mekong Riverfront, Clock Tower Memorial Park, and Phraya Sri Sattana Khon Ratchakhiri Park. This dynamic evolution underscores the city's adaptive approach to public space usage, aligning with the changing needs of its people and promoting contemporary development and inclusivity.

The city's public spaces can be divided into four distinctive zones, each playing a vital role in community relations and reflecting diverse cultural and functional aspects (Figure 5).

Zone 1, located in the northern part of the city, is inhabited mainly by the Vietnamese community. Initially an agricultural area, it has transformed into a cultural tourism hub, notably the Nong Sang community, which showcases Vietnamese heritage. Key public spaces here include Saint Anna Church at Saint Joseph Santayanun School (No. 2) and the Mekong Riverfront, characterized by colonial-style townhouses that blend Vietnamese community culture with Christian influences.

Zone 2, positioned in the city center, functions primarily as a government hub, housing administrative offices and staff residences. Public spaces within this zone serve the recreational and cultural needs of local residents, civil servants, and employees, hosting events like the Lai Reua Fai Festival and Loy Krathong Festival.

Zone 3, recognized as the city's business center, is a mixed-use area featuring both residential and commercial spaces. It serves as a crucial public space for various communities, including traders, Chinese and Vietnamese residents, and government employees. Noteworthy public spaces here include the bustling walking street, the Vietnamese Memorial Clock Tower, the vibrant Chinese-Indochina market, and the serene Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat public space. These areas facilitate trade, tourism, and leisure activities, accommodating diverse cultural expressions and traditions.

Zone 4, also known as the Southern Community (Ban Tai), lies in the southern part of the city and was originally settled by Thai-Lao people. It serves as a significant cultural and religious center for this ethnic group, encompassing temples and cultural public spaces along the Mekong River. The riverside area doubles as a recreational space, linked to Golden Beach. Plans are underway to expand public space development towards the southern zone along the Mekong River, transitioning from temple-centric areas to riverside spaces in order to accommodate commercial and tourism ventures.

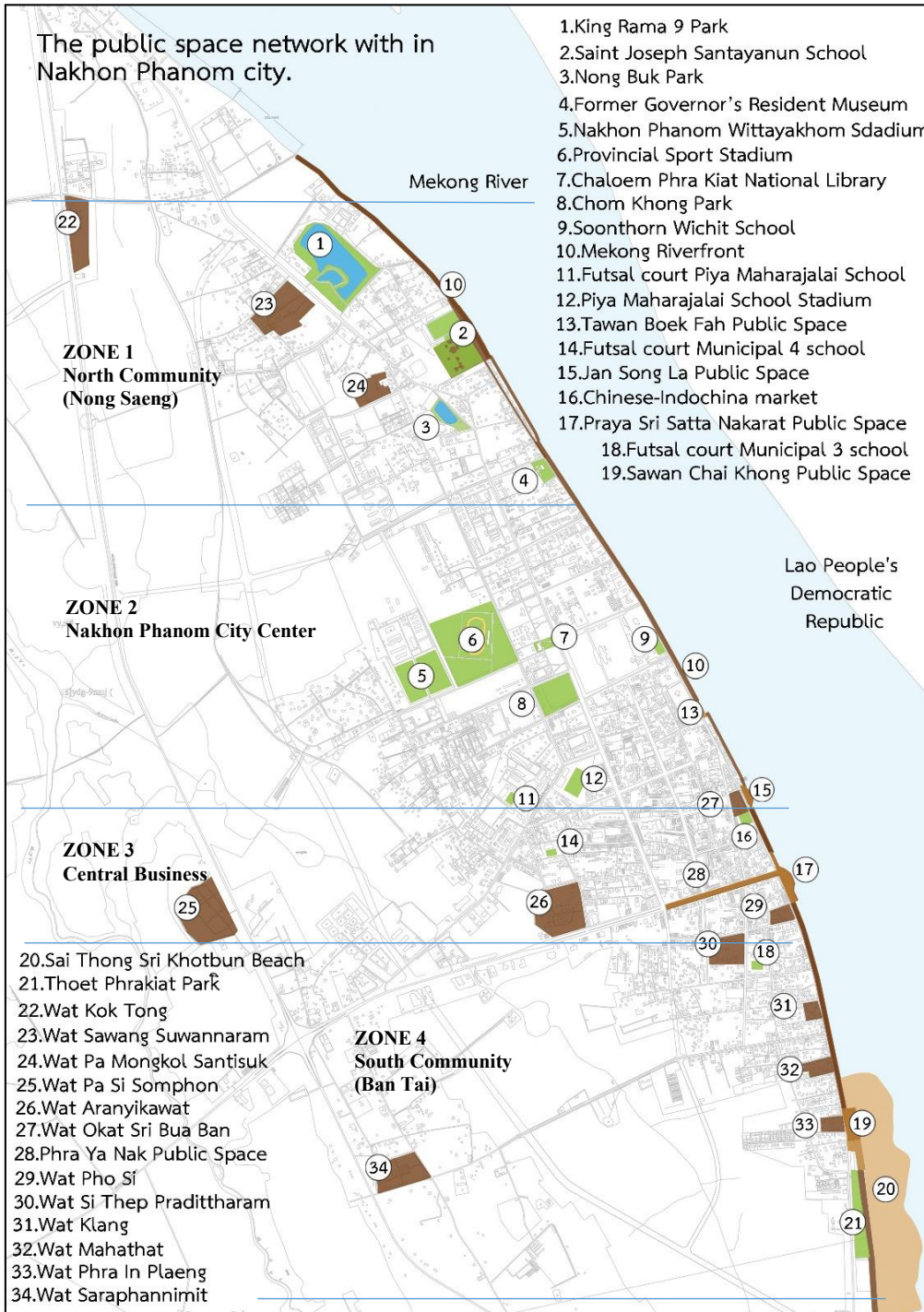


Figure 5 Public space distribution and community relations in Nakhon Phanom

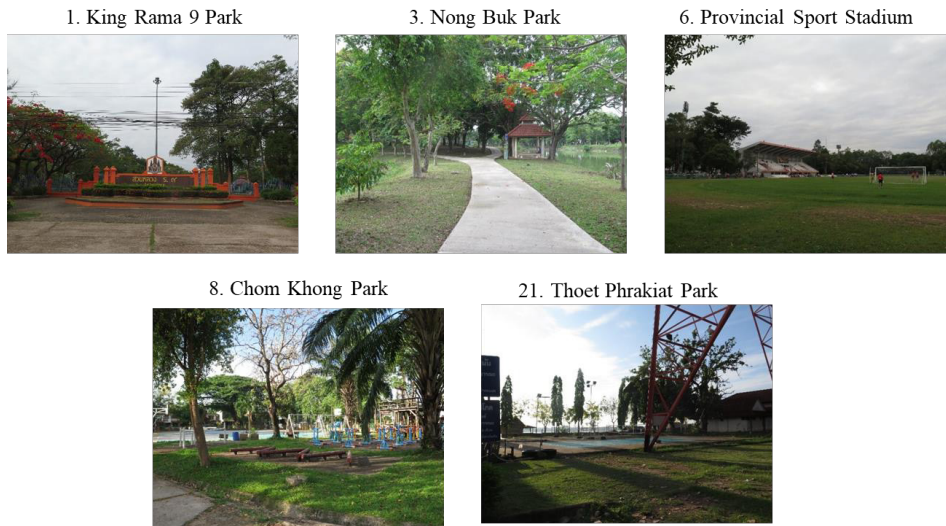


Figure 6 Recreational public spaces in Nakhon Phanom



Figure 7 Recreational public spaces located on the Mekong Riverfront

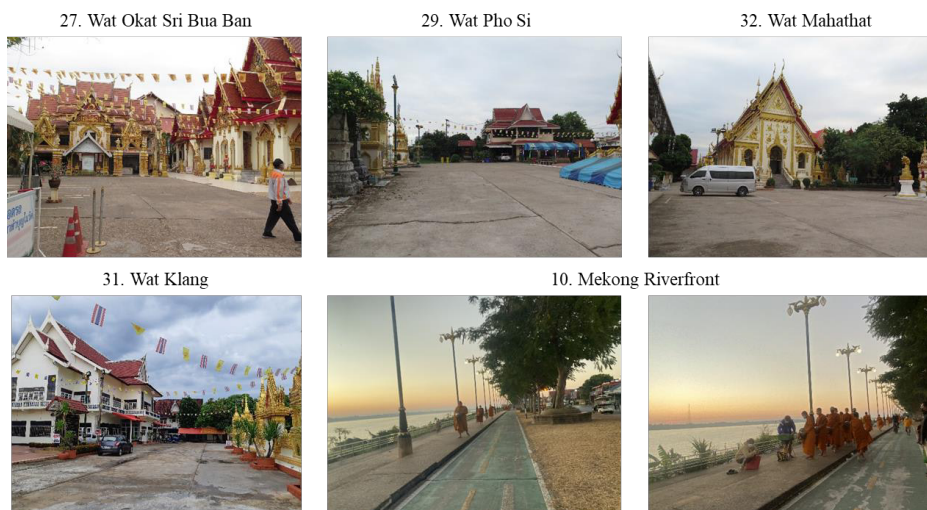


Figure 8 Religious public spaces



Figure 9 Public spaces in front of public buildings

In terms of public space ownership, government agencies wield authority over the majority of these spaces. However, the dynamic use by various groups at different times blurs the lines between private and public ownership, posing challenges in verification. Nevertheless, public spaces play a crucial role as hubs for diverse urban activities, particularly for regular users, underscoring the importance of local authorities in managing these spaces to establish appropriate behavioral patterns and timeframes for utilization.

Upon analyzing the relationship between people, space, cultural activities, and overall urban development in Nakhon Phanom, four crucial public spaces emerged: 1) *the Mekong River riverside area*, 2) *the King Rama 9 Park area*, 3) *the Chom Kong Garden area*, and 4) *the Provincial Central Sport Stadium area*. As illustrated in Figure 10, these spaces, distributed widely throughout the city, serve various purposes, including agricultural land, recreational areas, and exercise spaces. Government agencies use them for organizing both formal and informal activities, with the Mekong riverside area and Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat public space being the most significant locations.

The Mekong Riverfront, in particular, stands out as the most significant location, having undergone evident development that resulted from policies prioritizing urban activities and usage by local communities and tourists. Notable improvements include physical enhancements, the promotion of social activities, and the creation of events to enhance overall utilization. Human behavior and the use of public space are influenced by group movements, impacting activities such as exercise and major festivals. For instance, during merit-making rituals along the Mekong River, monks alter their routes to receive offerings, indicating a shift in urban activities towards the river.

Analysis using the public space concept of Goodsell (2003) reveals diverse interactions among people, supporting social interactions and fostering community engagement in activities. Public spaces become narratives with historical value, symbolizing political and democratic philosophies through public discourse. From a city planning perspective, public spaces express urban boundaries, focus on development and revitalization, and create replacements. Architecturally and politically, public spaces and buildings manifest identity, social significance, and political representation.

Examining significant public spaces in Nakhon Phanom, particularly along the Mekong River, highlights their diverse roles and contexts suitable for physical, social, and cultural use. They respond to urban life, carry social significance tied to memories, symbolically represent people's access to physical space, and serve as expressions of political roles. These results in varied forms of public space development over different periods, showcase the city's commitment to balancing historical preservation, community engagement, and contemporary urban planning.

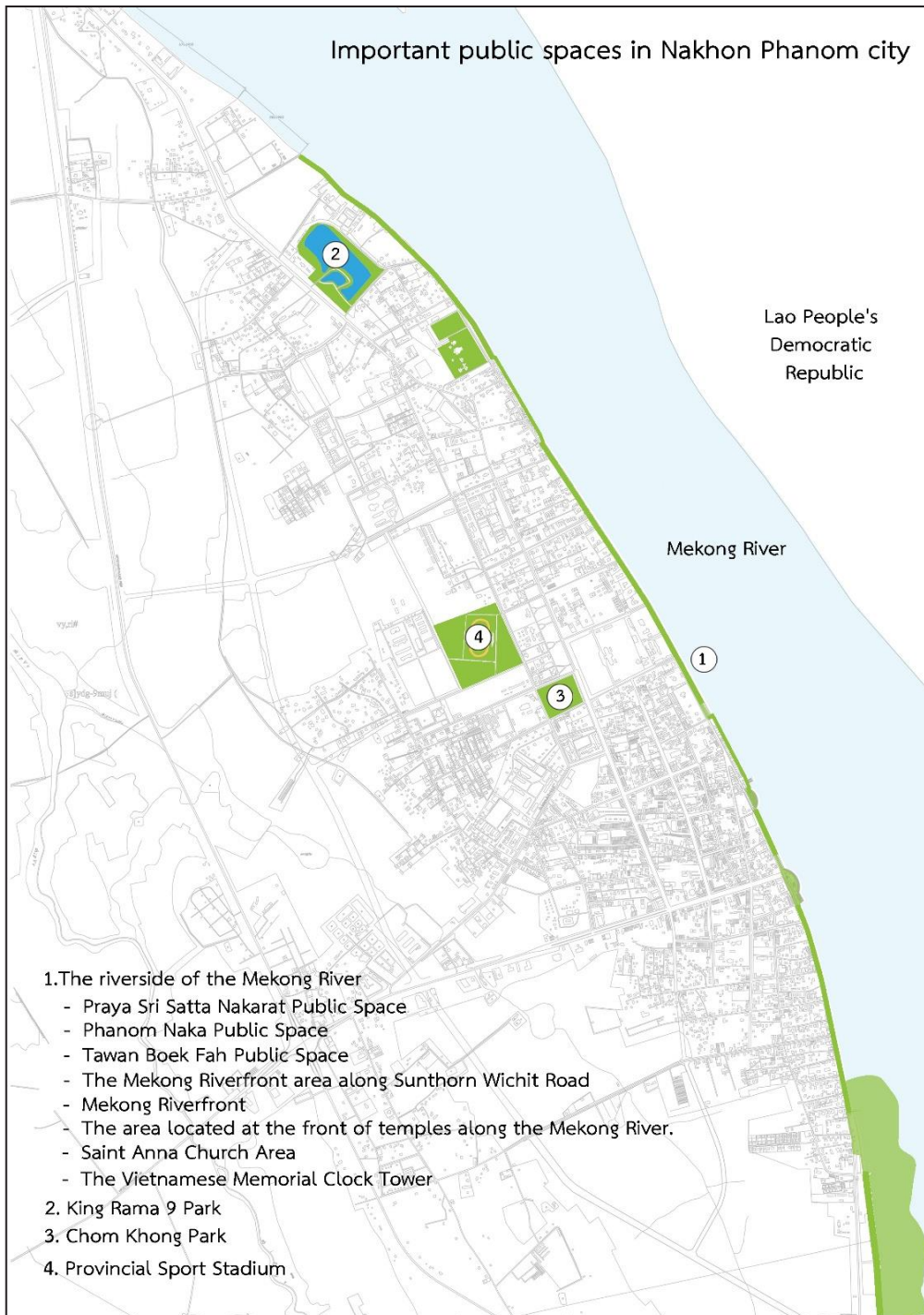


Figure 10 Important public spaces in Nakhon Phanom

Publicity of Cultural Space in Nakhon Phanom

Nakhon Phanom is a border town with residential characteristics. The city's development progressed gradually until it began to experience clear improvements through various national-level policies, which serve as the key factors influencing the development of Nakhon Phanom and its public spaces. This development can be categorized into the following three programs: 1) a ministerial regulation enforcing the Nakhon Phanom Comprehensive Plan in 1990, 2) the policy on the development of Special Economic Zones in 1992, and 3) the special economic development policy for tourism. Public spaces in Nakhon Phanom reflect the cultural activities and urban development of the region, showcasing distinct characteristics across three phases of development. The details are described below (Figure 11).

During the first phase, prior to 1990, the focus was on gradual and passive development emphasizing relaxation and leisure activities. Structural development aligned with the Ministerial Regulations of the City Plan of Nakhon Phanom in 1990, leading to systematic urban growth catering to the simple and nature-reliant culture of the time.

The second phase, spanning 1990-2019, witnessed significant events shaping the city's development, including the construction of the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge linking Nakhon Phanom with Khammouan in 2011. This period aligned with the economic corridor policy, prioritizing physical development to support economic growth. Public space development, particularly along the Mekong River, became a focal point. Nevertheless, traditional cultural patterns were not fully integrated into development initiatives until later. In 2014, efforts to transform the old ferry terminal area into a new tourism hub, including the establishment of Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat aimed to create a modern and inclusive public space. This phase emphasized the fusion of traditional and contemporary culture, shaping the city's landscape as a tourism and cultural city. The Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat space was completed in 1990. Public space development during this phase led to modern and inclusive activities for all user groups.

The third phase, characterized by the movement of the economic corridor policy for tourism, highlighted the strength of the local community and its cultural identity. Public space development around Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat spurred community engagement, with various associations and youth groups recognizing the significance of the space. Special events and traditional activities promoted by the government and local organizations, along with the involvement of young people, enhanced awareness of the area's cultural identity. Activities such as recreational areas, cycling routes, and connecting pathways along the Mekong River, including the Third Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge area, reflected the evolving utilization patterns and acceptance of the importance of the riverside area.

Future plans and policies aim to further develop tourism connectivity between Mueang Nakhon Phanom district and That Phanom district, the main tourist destination of Nakhon Phanom province, emphasizing the continued evolution of public spaces in response to cultural and economic shifts.

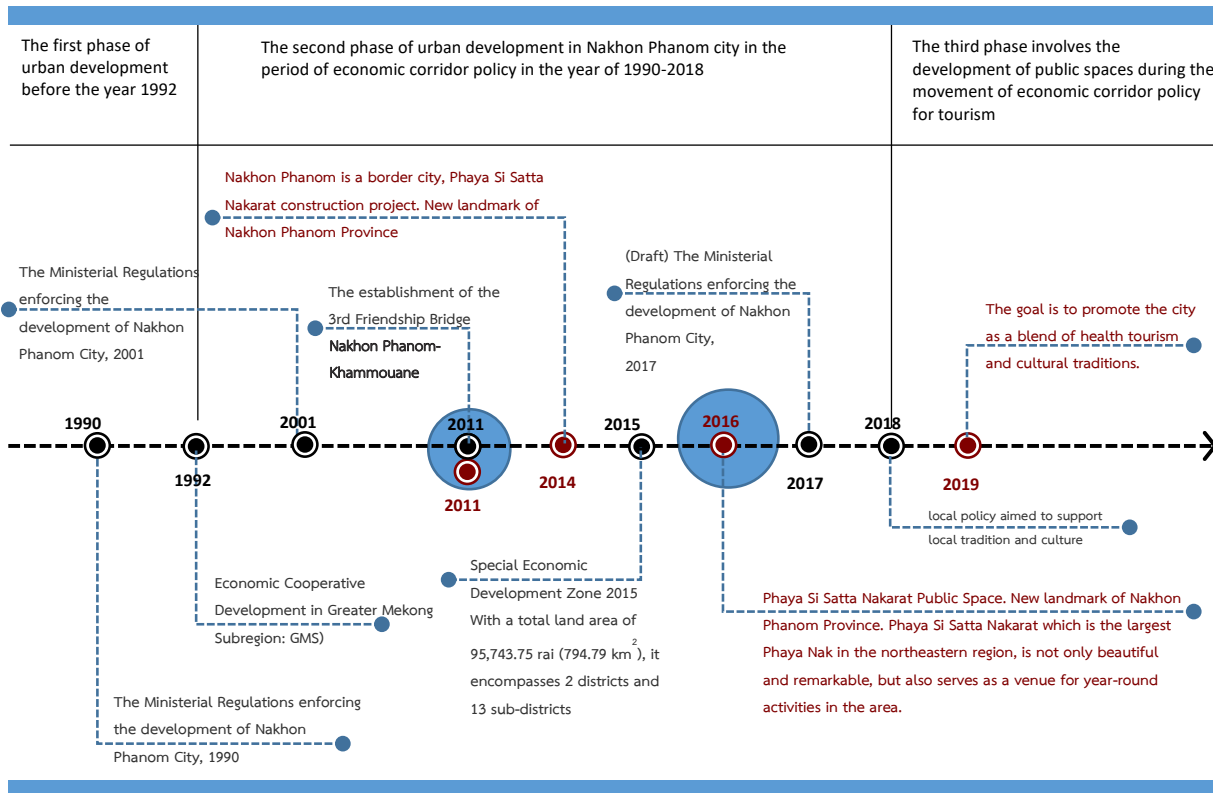


Figure 11 The history of city development and cultural public space development in Nakhon Phanom

With the potential of Nakhon Phanom’s urban area—featuring a clear physical identity with a long, narrow layout along the Mekong River, the area provides stunning scenery and views, setting it apart from other riverfront cities in Thailand. Additionally, the city presents a unique cultural diversity, consisting of eight ethnic groups and three nationalities. The clearly defined nationalities in Nakhon Phanom include the Thai-Lao, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities. Public spaces reflect the lifestyles and distinctive identities of each of these groups. Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping public spaces, with three primary dimensions identified: physical factors, cultural activity factors, and temporal factors (Piriyakarnnon and Thungsakul, 2021). These dimensions manifest in various forms within public spaces: traditional cultural public spaces, contemporary cultural public spaces, and hybrid contemporary cultural public spaces. In Nakhon Phanom, two significant factors—physical and cultural activities—contribute to the nature of cultural public spaces, delineating the following characteristics (Figure 12).

1) Traditional Cultural Public Spaces: Rooted in the customs of ethnic groups, these spaces host longstanding religious and cultural activities. Nakhon Phanom is home to three prominent nationalities—Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai-Lao—each with distinct traditions. Examples include *Heet 12 Kong 14* celebrations by Thai-Lao people and Chinese New Year festivities. These spaces serve as community hubs, often situated near temples and religious sites.

2) Cultural Public Spaces with a Popular Approach: Catering to younger generations, these spaces accommodate modern interpretations of traditional events. Found in government areas and public gardens, they serve recreational purposes. Key locations include government offices, schools, King Rama IX Park, and the Mekong Riverfront, fostering intergenerational and community interactions.

3) Cultural Public Spaces with a Contemporary Approach: Reflecting globalization's influence, these spaces blend traditional and modern cultures to enhance livability. Managed by local authorities, they promote social interactions and economic activities. Notably, Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat Space serves as a hub for commerce and tourism, showcasing the city's cultural fusion.

Nakhon Phanom's development initiatives prioritize cultural-based tourism, particularly along the Mekong River, aiming to preserve traditional values while appealing to diverse demographics. However, temporal considerations reveal a cultural blending over time, highlighting the significance of public spaces in showcasing cultural diversity. Notable spaces include Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat Park and the riverside area near Wat Phra In Plang, fostering social processes and traditional activities with support from local organizations and government bodies.

In conclusion, Nakhon Phanom's cultural public spaces, evolving from traditional cultural spaces that align with popular trends into new hybrid cultural spaces, reflect a dynamic interplay of tradition, modernity, and globalization. These transformations stem from key factors that support both daily and special activities, promoting cultural identity in a way that resonates with all groups—new generations, local residents, various ethnic communities, and outsiders—while enhancing overall quality of life. Through strategic development and community engagement, these spaces serve as vital platforms for preserving heritage, fostering social cohesion, and promoting tourism. As the city continues to evolve, maintaining a balance between tradition and contemporary influences remains crucial in sustaining its cultural identity and appeal as a tourist destination.

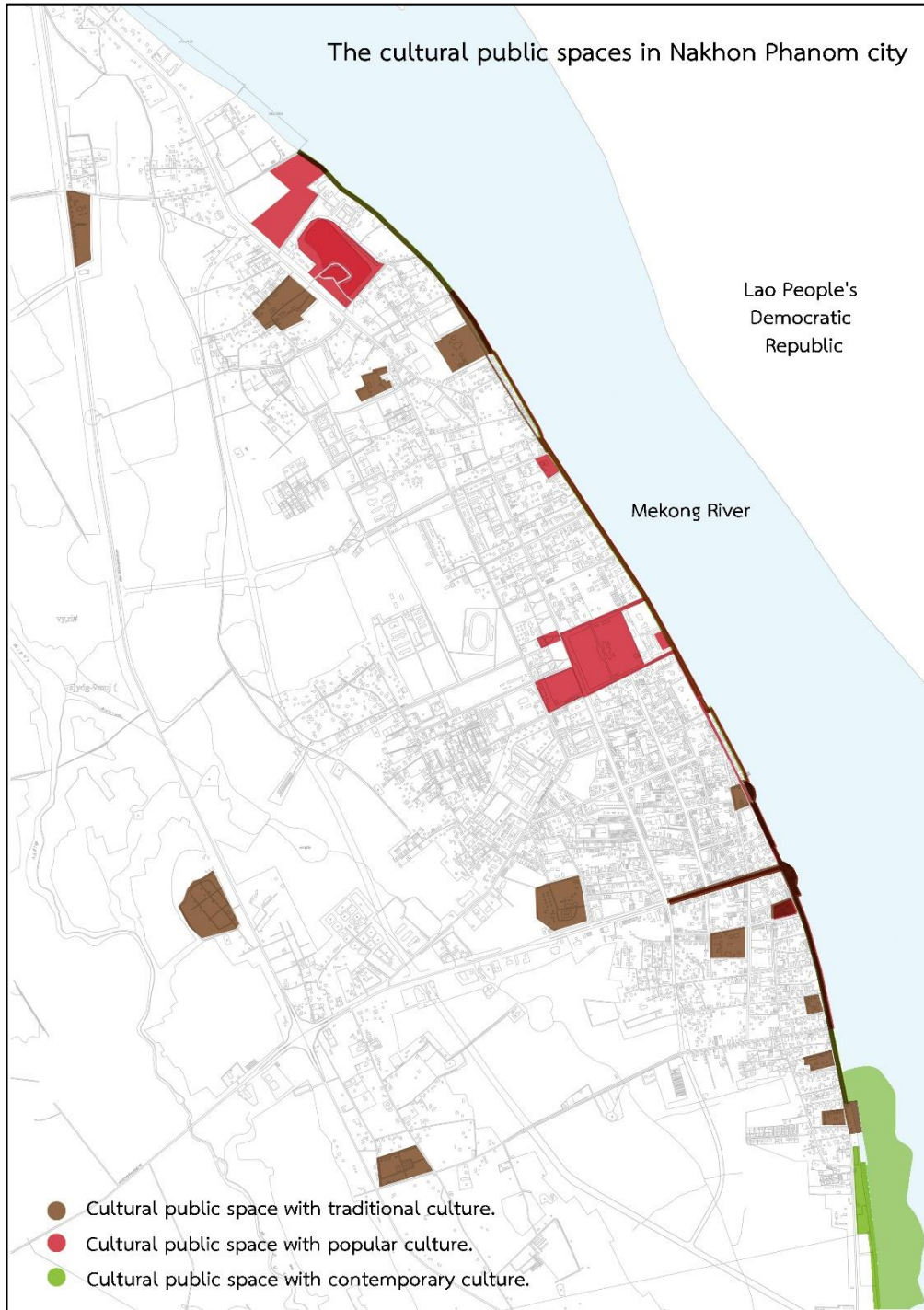


Figure 12 Map of cultural public spaces in Nakhon Phanom

Management of Cultural Space in Nakhon Phanom

Public space management in Nakhon Phanom reflects a centralized approach governed by local agencies, responding to directives from higher authorities. This top-down “centralization” style of management emphasizes physical infrastructure development over cultural promotion, focusing on establishing special economic zones rather than urbanization for residents. However, a transformative shift occurred in 2016 with the emergence of the “New Generation Youth” movement, advocating for a bottom-up management style. This grassroots movement highlighted the cultural potential of the area, embracing diversity and empowering local communities to preserve their unique identity (Figure 13).

The shift towards bottom-up management promoted collaboration and decentralized power, allowing public spaces to meet the evolving needs and usage patterns of the community. This approach aligns with the trend of tourism activities among the new generation, emphasizing the preservation of original culture while integrating new elements. Administrators, alongside the new generation and local residents, collaborated to redefine the functions of public spaces, resulting in a new pattern of development that prioritizes cultural potential and community engagement in Nakhon Phanom.

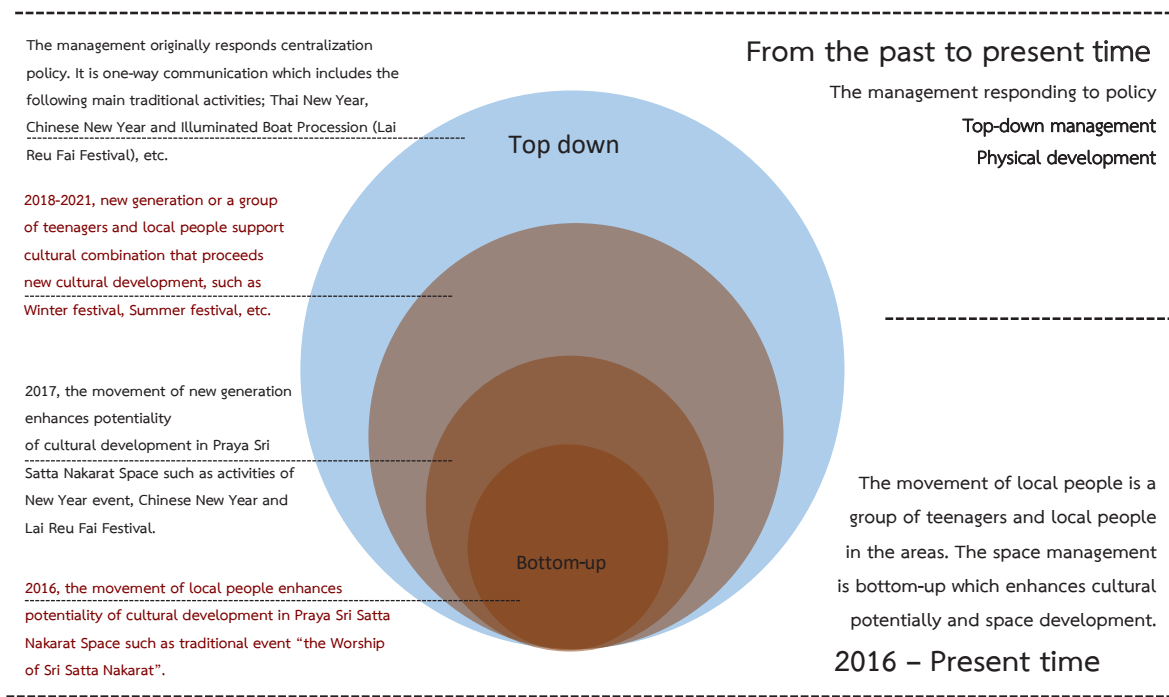


Figure 13 Top down and bottom-up management of cultural space in Nakhon Phanom

The management of cultural public spaces in Nakhon Phanom was previously overseen by local organizations or private sector agencies, aligning with policy plans at various levels. Emphasis was placed on the physical aspects, engaging in activities reflecting societal lifestyles and managing spaces based on social power dynamics, which in turn shaped social relationships with the space. This approach influenced social behaviors and fostered a cyclical process involving awareness, usage, and political symbolism.

Currently, a shift driven by consumerism has emerged within the social process, influenced by societal impacts and by policies from both the government and the private sector. Public spaces serve as reflections of cultural evolution, transitioning from past to present expressions and leading to expected

future trends. This cultural transformation underscores the multifaceted utility of public spaces, further augmented by technological advancements facilitating diverse functionalities within these spaces (Figure 14).

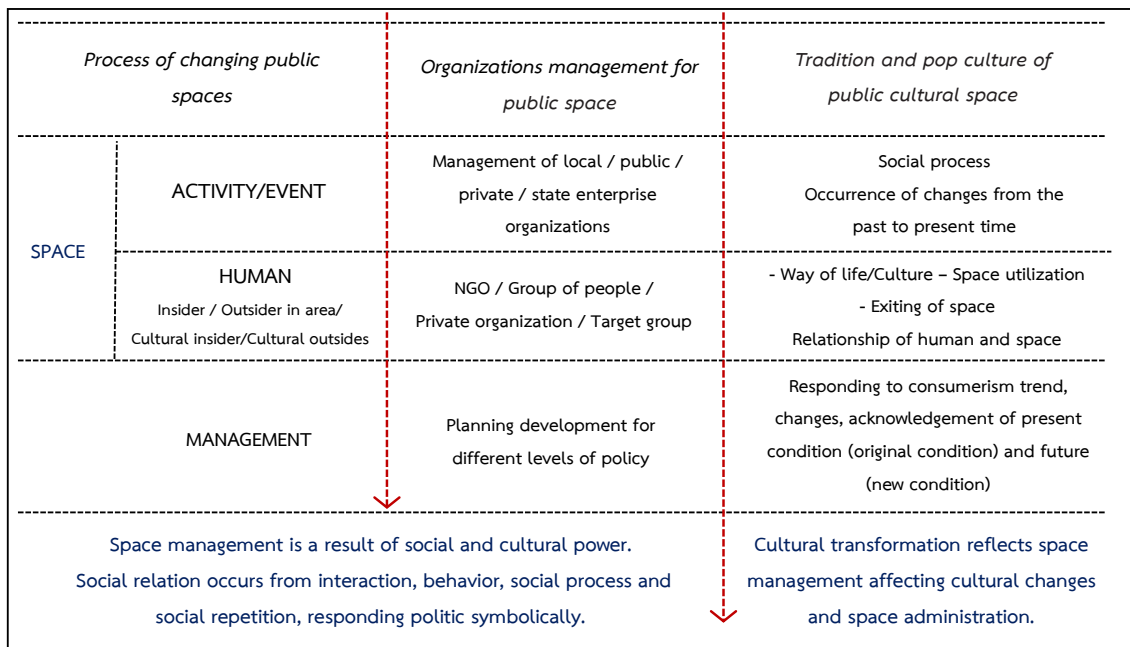


Figure 14 The management of cultural public space in Nakhon Phanom

Cultural Public Spaces Surrounding the Mekong Riverfront

Cultural public spaces along the Mekong Riverfront in Nakhon Phanom are characterized by a linear span stretching approximately 4 km. Over time, this area has transitioned from agricultural land to a multifunctional space encompassing leisure, exercise, cultural activities, and tourism. Its significance as a cultural hub continues to evolve, reflecting ongoing movement processes (Figures 15, 16).

Central to public space development is the Mekong River’s surrounding area, which has witnessed dynamic changes in function and community engagement. Adaptations have rendered these spaces versatile, catering to the needs of both younger and older generations. Notably, Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat has stood as a prominent landmark symbolizing the continuous evolution of public spaces in Nakhon Phanom since 2016 to the present day. This transformation underscores the area’s cultural significance and its role in shaping the city’s identity and development.

The development of public spaces along the Mekong Riverfront in Nakhon Phanom has been a collaborative effort between the government and private sectors, aiming to create multifunctional spaces that respond to the needs of the populace amidst the consumerist era. Notable spaces such as Phanom Naka Space, Tawan Buge Fah Space, Stand of Rim Kong Dam, areas in front of temples and Saint Anna Church, and Praya Sri Satta Nakarat Space represent a blend of Thai, Lao, Chinese, Vietnamese, and indigenous cultures, with active involvement from the new generation. This development process combines contemporary, traditional, and popular cultures¹, resulting in public spaces with overlapping purposes and

¹ Traditional cultural public spaces are public spaces associated with the customs, communities, and ethnicities originally rooted in the area, which have been used continuously through time. Popular cultural public spaces refer to those associated with new generations, where activities correspond to global trends and the influence of modernity and globalization. Meanwhile, hybrid or contemporary cultural public spaces are those that respond to current needs by integrating elements of both traditional and modern cultures, forming a cohesive blend of heritage and modernity.

utilities, serving as serene exercise spots and cultural showcases for diverse communities. This overlap indicates that public spaces in Nakhon Phanom embody a harmonious blend of contemporary and traditional cultures, accommodating the dynamic needs of the community.

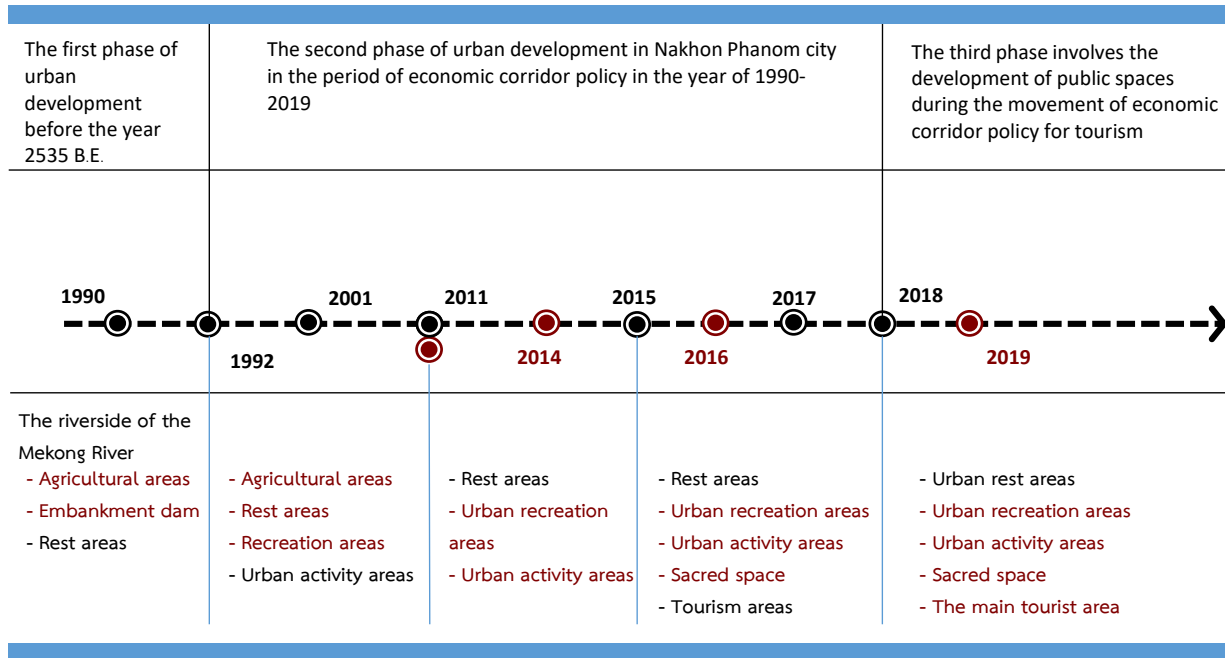


Figure 15 The development and evolution of public spaces along the Mekong Riverfront in Nakhon Phanom

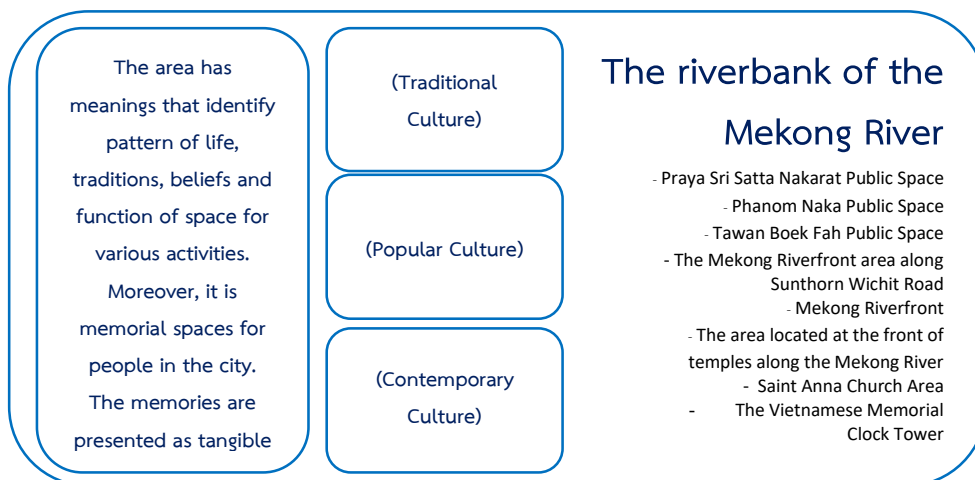


Figure 16 The development of the riverbank area from the past (top left) to the present (top right and bottom)

The examination of the production of space shows that the utility of a space is intricately linked to the social reactions and experiences of individuals. The relationship between physical space and imagery space undergoes transformations or dynamics that arise from social processes and repetitions. These dynamics create a spatial circle comprising representations of space, representational space, and spatial space, leading to social repetitions that reflect new meanings in the utilization of public space and from the dynamics of cultural public space transformation. Such meanings evolve over time in response to development trends as well as constantly changing social and cultural conditions. These shifts have led local people, including various ethnic groups, to adapt and accept changes in accordance with consumerist cultural trends. This reflects an openness to new cultures, resulting in appropriate and harmonious integration by the people of Nakhon Phanom.

Praya Sri Satta Nakarat Space serves as a prime example of the movement within public spaces (Figure 17). From the initial functions as a harbor for shipping and a venue for traditional Chinese activities, the physical character and usage have been transformed due to government policies in relation to public space development. Praya Sri Satta Nakarat Space has evolved into a sacred and recreational space for Nakhon Phanom residents, attracting visitors who seek religious experiences and relaxation. This dynamic represents a continuous movement of public space, forming a cycle of changes.

The concept of public space (Carr and others, 1992) stresses the significance of the surrounding context in free public spaces, acknowledging the societal influence on different types of public spaces. Social public space (Rapoport, 1977) studies factors affecting public space, activity systems, and cultural significance, focusing on historical background, settlement, and cultures that shape environmental elements and spaces responsive to each community's physical and cultural context.

Examining activities in networked public spaces, (Gehl, 1987) identifies primary activities such as necessary, optional or recreational, and resultant or social activities. The term cultural space (Yoshimi and Shakaigaku, 1992) suggests that this space functions as a conduit for social reactions and relations, imbuing spaces with meaning. These concepts—space, publicity, and cultural public space—along the Mekong riverbank present an amalgamation of history and modernity that connects community history, ways of life, cultures, and related activities. These spaces hold meanings intertwined with traditions, beliefs, and negotiations of social power, making them vital cultural public spaces in Nakhon Phanom.

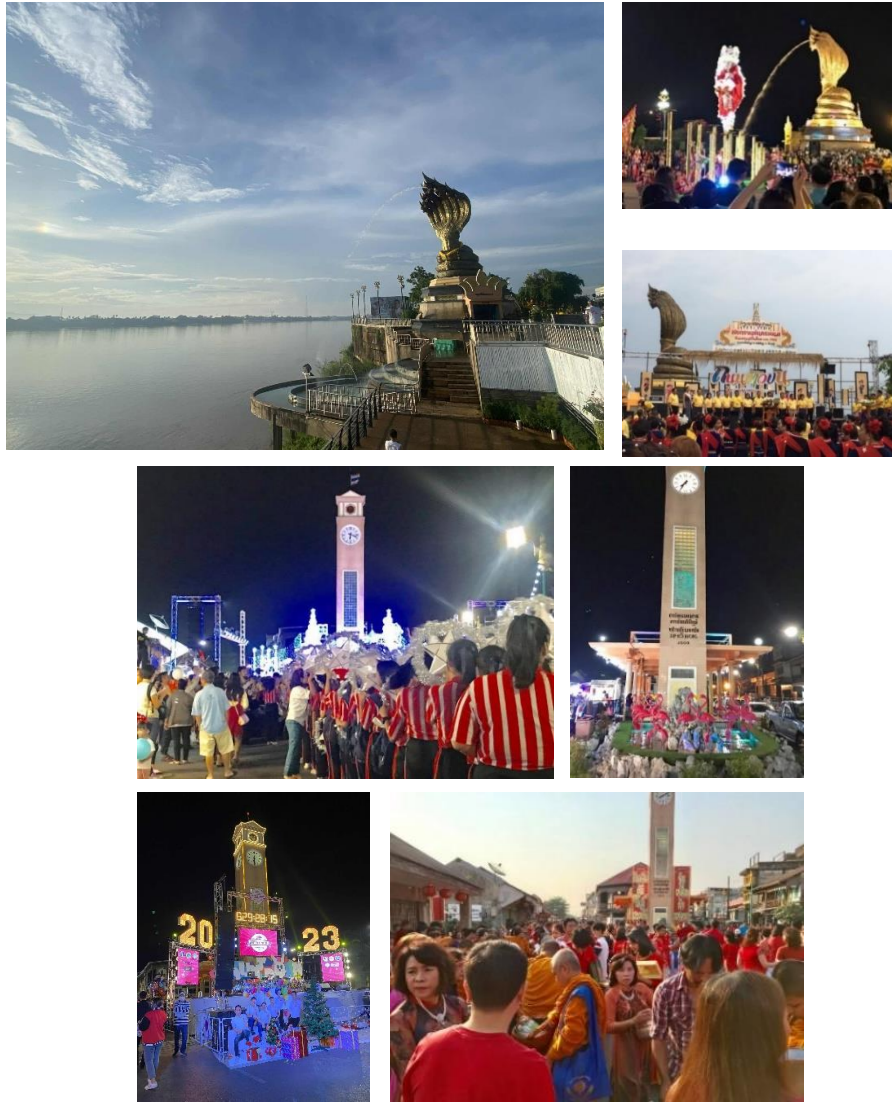


Figure 17 A new landmark of Nakhon Phanom Phraya Sri Satta Nakarat Space (the top three photos) and Vietnamese Memorial Clock Tower (last two rows of photos)

Discussion

The cultural public spaces in Nakhon Phanom epitomize the intersection of public space and cultural dynamics, showcasing the intricate relationship between people and their surroundings. These spaces underscore the significance of physical attributes, utilization, behavior, function, and management in shaping cultural narratives. They serve as reflections of the local community's way of life, encompassing ethnicity, culture, social values, and traditions throughout the history timeline. The interaction between people and spaces unfolds as a narrative, embodying local identity, social, mental, and cultural dimensions.

Environmental factors play a pivotal role, as public spaces possess distinct physical characteristics subject to change influenced by government policies. Behaviorally, these spaces offer relaxation, aesthetics, and contemporary activities tailored to their unique context. The symbiotic relationship between people and space facilitates transformations in public spaces driven by periods of utilization and cultural shifts, as illustrated in Figure 18.

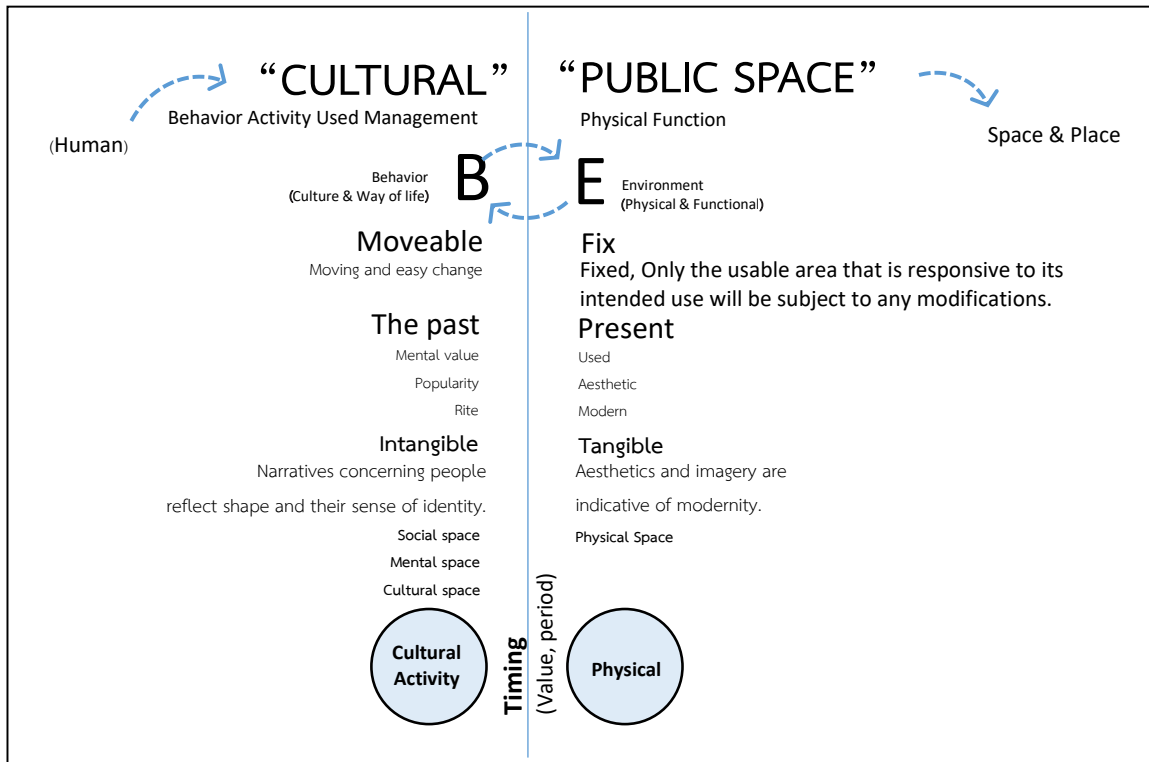


Figure 18 Cultural factors and their relationship with public space

Nakhon Phanom is home to an array of cultural public spaces, blending traditional, modern, and contemporary elements, represented by the Mekong riverbank. This locale serves as a melting pot of cultures, meeting the diverse needs of the local populace. Factor analysis underscores its suitability, catering to the multifaceted requirements of the community while aesthetically representing various cultural identities.

The riverbank area serves as a cultural nexus for the Thai-Lao, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities, influenced by emerging trends and consumerism. Over time, the meaning and function of these spaces have evolved in response to cultural dynamics and societal trends. Change in public spaces has played a crucial role, aligning with periods conducive to fostering cultural diversity, policy development, economic and tourism considerations, and intergenerational exchange of ideas.

These dynamic changes represent social processes driving the evolution of cultural public spaces in Nakhon Phanom. Understanding the interplay of social and physical requirements, urbanization, historical context, functions, and temporal dimensions is essential. This comprehension imbues cultural significance through social processes, utilization, acknowledgment, and effective management of public spaces, facilitating changes that reflect shifting cultural values.

Conclusion

The Mekong Riverfront, is a cultural and public space in Nakhon Phanom that intertwines traditional, contemporary, and hybrid cultures, which have evolved from traditional cultural forms and popular culture into contemporary culture. This development reflects the overlapping of cultures and their uses, influenced by consumerism, symbolic consumption, and the emergence of new cultures. This has led to the creation

of new cultural public spaces and fluid, ongoing changes, resulting in ambiguities in the meaning of public and cultural spaces. For example, the areas around the shrine of Phraya Muen Nakhon Phanom and the Vietnamese Memorial Clock Tower originally expressed separate meanings and functions for the Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic groups. These spaces provided public, social, and cultural activities for each ethnic group. However, as they were used in daily life, shared traditions, and beliefs, these spaces started to be used in a more integrated manner. Combined with local policies promoting tourism, the formation of Chinese and Vietnamese merchant associations led to the promotion of new cultural activities. This cultural movement has resulted in the blending of contemporary culture with traditional culture, creating a hybrid cultural identity and multiple layers of meaning for these spaces. Interestingly, these spaces still retain their original meanings for the Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic groups. This article highlights the importance of analyzing cultural factors to classify public spaces, allowing for the development of further applications and guidelines for other public spaces.

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