Reimagining Public Art in Thailand: Policy, Practice and Sustainability

Pawinee Boonserm[+] & Nantida Chandransu[++] (Thailand)

Abstract

This research examines how governments promote public art through funding, mandate spaces and research support using international case studies. However, challenges such as centralized funding and restrictions on artistic expression persist. The study proposes a framework for "public art" within fine arts, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration and sustainable practices in Thailand. It underscores the importance of collaborative creativity, community engagement, and policy advocacy for a thriving public art landscape. Findings reveal the potential of public art to address societal challenges, foster social healing, and contribute to cultural preservation and economic development. Recommendations include promoting decentralized, community-led initiatives, establishing supportive policies, and fostering inter-ministerial collaboration. This research offers valuable insights for enhancing the role of public art in Thailand, particularly in addressing urgent social issues and promoting sustainable development.

Keywords: *Public Art, Government Policies, Sustainability, Community Engagement, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Thailand*

[+] Pawinee Boonserm, Asst.Prof., Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Thammasat University, Thailand.
   email: pawipop11@gmail.com.
[++] Nantida Chandransu, Asst. Prof., Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand.
   email: nantida.cha@mahidol.ac.th.

Introduction

The term "public art" encompasses a multitude of interpretations, with its meaning adaptable to the specific intentions and objectives of each project. A review of relevant literature reveals that public art can serve various functions, including showcasing community artistic and cultural values, enhancing the environment, transforming landscapes, and raising awareness, among others. These artworks are typically displayed in public spaces, emphasizing their accessibility to all. The process often involves collaboration between organizers, artists, the community, and various networks, all working towards a shared goal (Association for Public Art, 2020, cited in Chantrangsu, 2023).

In the context of this project, the researcher defines "public art" as the development of creative spaces for community arts and culture, coupled with the organization of learning activities related to community arts and culture. This approach aligns with the sustainable development goals (SDGs), specifically target 11.4, which aims to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, social integration is considered crucial, with careful consideration given to the appropriate timing and context for integration. The project also emphasizes a bottom-up approach, involving a non-hierarchical model of collaboration that originates from the grassroots level. This approach fosters cooperation among small groups with shared ideas and aligned goals, leading to concrete action. (Wattananarong, 2013)

Currently, the organization of public art events (as defined in certain contexts) is gaining momentum in Thai society, particularly in Bangkok and various provinces. However, data collection and past research indicate that the sustainability of such events remains limited, except in areas with supportive policies and continuous funding, both in cash and in kind. A notable example is "Chula Art Town," initiated by the Chulalongkorn University Property Management Office. Most current public art manifestations take the form of festivals, events, or activities, often lacking sustainability. A key concern is the inadequacy of efforts focused on conservation, preservation, and innovative reinterpretation of cultural heritage. This issue impacts the safeguarding of national cultural heritage and its effective dissemination and understanding among the wider public.

Based on past research encompassing various aspects of public art, including conservation, preservation, artistic creation, reinterpretation, exhibition, and audience engagement platforms, it is evident that the management systems for creative spaces vary across different areas, significantly influencing sustainability. Most initiatives are individual, network-based, or festival-oriented, relying on the cultural capital of artists (embodied state, knowledge, skills, and social capital). Sufficient social capital and diverse networks can lead to the establishment of sustainable supply chains for managing festivals and events.

Several countries have demonstrated successful models of government involvement in public art, ranging from policy formulation to implementation and addressing limitations. Case studies from France, the United States, Taiwan, and Sweden reveal that governments can effectively promote public art through legislation that directly supports artists' creative endeavors or mandates the inclusion of public art spaces in public construction projects. They can also foster public participation in the creation of public art, establish dedicated agencies to oversee and support public art initiatives, and provide research funding to generate knowledge that informs public art policies.

However, public art initiatives in many countries face challenges. These include centralized funding mechanisms, non-inclusive artist selection processes, and cultural or political restrictions on artistic expression in public spaces. Despite these limitations, public art policies have yielded positive outcomes such as an increase in public artworks, the integration of community-focused ideas into art and art-related activities, increased employment opportunities and professionalization for artists, and enhanced aesthetic appeal of public spaces. Public art also contributes to tourism promotion.

These examples raise the question of whether the Thai government could adopt similar policies to address social issues through public art. However, Thailand's structural limitations and political volatility pose challenges to policy continuity. To address this, the research project aims to identify suitable public art practices for Thailand, supported by funding from the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) Program Management Unit for Human Resources & Institutional. Development, Research and Innovation (PMU-B). The goal is to develop recommendations for public art creation, particularly in urgent situations where art can contribute to national development, with a focus on the concept of public art.

Research Objectives
To investigate and propose a framework for "public art" within the field of Fine Arts that fosters interdisciplinary connections and drives sustainable public art initiatives in Thailand, contributing to national development and addressing urgent social issues.

Research Questions:
1.   Conceptual Framework and Interdisciplinary Connections: How can 'Public art' in fine arts foster interdisciplinary collaborations to drive sustainable collaborations to drive sustainable initiatives for Thailand's national development.
2.   Driving Public Art and Artist Sustainability: What creative processes, knowledge, and methodologies can be generated to drive impactful public art initiatives and provide solutions for artistic production in Thailand? Additionally, what recommendations can be offered to enhance the professional survival and adaptation strategies of artists engaged in public art practices?

Research Methods
The researcher employed a qualitative research approach to explore ideas, information, and phenomena related to public art initiatives both in Thailand and internationally. This included examining artistic creations, relevant policies, and creative concepts.

Stage 1: Preparatory Stage
Literature Review: The researcher conducted a comprehensive review of literature and media resources to gather information on public art policies and artistic creations for the public, both in Thailand and internationally. This included identifying successful interventions and best practices related to art policies and social development.

Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews:
• Seven experts in various fields related to the research topic were engaged in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. These fields included cultural management, creative economy promotion, cultural space management, music, art & performance.

- A total of 16 artists from visual arts, performing arts, and music fields participated in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The discussions explored their creative concepts, adaptation methods, frameworks, and approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration. Participants also shared case studies, artworks, recommendations, and views on public art exhibition spaces, collaboration with other sectors for sustainable development, project suggestions, and other relevant issues. The artists were categorized into performing arts (5 individuals), music (3 individuals), visual arts (2 individuals), and emerging artists (6 individuals).

This multi-faceted approach allowed for a rich and nuanced understanding of the current landscape of public art, both in Thailand and globally, and provided valuable insights to inform the development of a framework for sustainable public art initiatives in Thailand.

Stage 2: Analysis, Synthesis, and Reporting
- Expert Panel Discussion: A panel discussion was organized to facilitate the synthesis and extraction of lessons learned from the development of artworks and initiatives. The panel will comprise experts in cultural policy implementation, a representative from the Thai National Commission for UNESCO, a representative from the International Council of Traditional Music in Thailand, experts in city and regional planning, visual arts, along with urban design, and five stakeholders. The discussion will focus on the following key points:

  1. *Knowledge Exchange:* The panel will explore the knowledge generated from international perspectives on public art and the findings of this research (new framework). This will include an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) associated with the proposed framework, as well as strategies for its adaptation and application for public benefit in various contexts.
  2. *Lessons Learned:* The panel will analyze the lessons essential for the public art approach, focusing on new creative processes for driving public art initiatives within the arts dimension. This will include recommendations for artists regarding their mental well-being and professional survival, emphasizing the role of art in contributing to social well-being.

This stage aims to consolidate the findings from the previous stage and generate actionable insights through expert discussions. The outcomes will inform the development of recommendations for sustainable and impactful public art practices in Thailand.

Lessons and Models of Public Art Management Policies from Governments Abroad
A survey of public art management policies globally reveals the significant role of government policies in shaping public art creation. It represents a connection between art and architecture for the public benefit, integrating arts and culture into national policies for urban development. This concept has proliferated from Western democracies to Asia over the past half-century, starting in the 1950s, as detailed below.

Public and Private Sector Collaboration in Driving Public Art: The Case of France
France pioneered concrete policies for funding public art. In 1950, the government introduced the Percent for Art Provisions law, allocating a percentage of public construction budgets to fund public art projects. Government agencies initiated and promoted various

art-related activities in public spaces, encompassing any artwork found or created in these areas. The Percent for Art Provisions resulted in a proliferation of public artworks. However, it also drew criticism from French intellectuals and art experts, who traditionally value independent critique, regarding the centralized nature of the funding system.

The law was criticized for its centralized governance approach, with top-down strategic planning and government agencies as the primary initiators and drivers of activities. This changed in 1990 when the private "Foundation of France" collaborated with the government to launch the New Patrons Public Art Plan Les Nouveaux Commands in French. This program involves project proposals and funding for artistic creations. The government and large corporations are invited to establish organizations to receive donations. The implementation plan includes three groups participating in decision-making: patrons (individuals or legal entities), artists, and art experts who act as intermediaries between artists, patrons, and others involved in the creation or procurement of public art.

To date, the New Patrons Public Art Plan has supported over 500 public art projects installed in France and across Europe. This concept revolutionized art patronage through a democratic approach to project management. Simultaneously, it reflects the French government's shift towards empowering communities and local authorities with cultural interaction, decentralizing power, and promoting policy equality. Besides France, several other European countries have adopted similar policies, including Italy, Spain, Germany, and Switzerland, as well as countries on other continents like the USA and Chile (Apichitsakul, 2017: 18-21).

The case studies of France's Percent for Art Provisions in1950 and the New Patrons Public Art Plan in 1990 demonstrate successful models and positive lessons. They highlight the government's prioritization of public art through collaboration with the private sector. Government support, through funding for artists, has fostered the growth of public art. However, the centralized approach faced criticism. The involvement of private foundations in promoting public art policies helped mitigate this weakness by decentralizing operations and empowering local authorities and the private sector in a democratic manner, effectively returning control over public art projects and spaces to the community.

Mandating Public Art Installations in Government Construction Projects: The Case of the United States

The United States, following France's example, has implemented policies for public art management. Each state under the federal government has laws similar to France's Percent for Art Provisions in 1950. For instance, the state of Washington enacted the Percentage for Art law in 1959, overseen by the General Services Administration, responsible for drafting policies related to state properties. Data indicates that between 1962 and 1978, the government commissioned 145 artworks from artists. In 1962, several pieces were created to promote the World's Fair held that year. Subsequently, in 1976, the law in Washington mandated that half of all construction projects funded by the state budget must include public art installations. Besides Washington, several other states passed similar laws around the same time, such as Florida in 1974 and Oregon and Alaska in 1976. However, due to the republican system of government, the specifics of policy management vary across states.

For example, in 1982, New York City enacted New York's Percent for Art, which allocates a portion of the budget for construction projects exceeding ten million US dollars towards various art projects within the construction area (Apichitsakul, 2017: 21).
The US approach to public art policy demonstrates government support leading to the growth of public art through artist funding, similar to France. It also highlights the role of publicly funded art in world exhibitions and tourism promotion. Despite limitations regarding mandatory installations and artist selection processes for government construction projects, as well as variations in legal details, these policies align with the spirit of the republican constitution, where each state has its own laws enforced by local governments, resulting in diverse public art policies across states (Apichitsakul, 2017: 21). Nevertheless, this policy success has served as a model for other countries, such as Taiwan, which adopted similar legislation mandating public art installations in government construction projects, albeit with different proportions, as discussed in the next section.

1% Public Art Management Policy: The Case of Taiwan

In the Asian context, Taiwan stands out for its laws and policies related to public art and cultural promotion, influenced by Western practices. These include policies and laws that support and mandate the creation of art through government investment, while also encouraging private sector and public participation in creative endeavors. Taiwan is considered a pioneer in Asia for successfully implementing public art policies, facilitated by its democratic context and the government's push for economic and social development policies since the 1990s.

The Taiwanese government implemented the 1% public art policy through the Cultural and Art Reward Act in 1992 to ensure continuous support for public art. This law mandates that 1% of the total budget for all government construction projects be allocated for procuring and installing public art in public spaces. This policy has led to an increase in public art throughout Taiwan, especially in major cities like Taipei. The policy's connection to contemporary art in Taiwan is evident through four key characteristics that serve as a model for success:

1. Alignment with state art management regulations: Clear procedures for procuring or creating public art are established.
2. Openness to artists regardless of nationality: Both professional and amateur artists can participate, with four main methods for selecting artworks. The most popular method involves open competitions, emphasizing public participation (although artists may not have the same freedom for political critique in public art as in Western countries, reflecting distinct political cultures).
3. Community-oriented approach: Public art trends towards communitarianism, both in the form of artworks and artistic activities that support education and public participation.
4. Positive impact on the contemporary art scene: The policy has brought tangible positive changes to the broader contemporary art scene in Taiwan. It has achieved its goal of raising professional standards in the arts by supporting artists, art-related professions, academics, and art management experts. Additionally, it has enhanced the aesthetic appeal of public spaces through the resulting public artworks (Apichitsakul, 2017).

Generating Knowledge about Public Art: The Case of Sweden

Beyond mandatory funding policies and public participation, governments also play a role in supporting public art through research funding to generate knowledge. Sweden exemplifies this approach with its dedicated governmental agency, the Public Art Agency of Sweden, established in 1937 under the Ministry of Culture. The agency supports and oversees the installation of permanent artworks in public spaces, temporary exhibitions, museum collections, and aesthetic urban development. Its website states that its primary mission is to provide high-quality contemporary art for buildings used by the central government. The agency also supports public spaces not owned by the central government and provides information about public art to society. Moreover, the artworks supported and managed by the agency represent the current era, and contemporary art is viewed not only as permanent visual art but also encompasses human experiences, social interactions, and critical and creative practices in life, covering both mental and social public spaces. Currently, the agency receives an annual government budget of over 42.9 million Swedish Krona for producing public art, with an additional 31.8 million Krona for specific projects (Konstråd, 2023).

The emphasis on intangible public spaces (mental public spaces) by the Public Art Agency Sweden is evident through its funding of research on public art. This is reflected in annual reports on the current state of public art research in Nordic countries and the broader international context. For example, the "Public Art Research Report" (2018) by Kjell Caminha and Prof. Håkan Nilsson (2018) aims to identify the need for and opportunities to develop research programs that support public art paradigms, policies, and practices in Sweden.

The report by Caminha and Nilsson (2018: 59) indicates that knowledge about public art in Nordic countries and globally is rich and covers a wide range of disciplines, including history, art theory, urbanism, sociology, geography, architecture, economics, management, and cultural studies. It encompasses both academic research and research actions. The report suggests potential for developing public art research by promoting interdisciplinary references and fostering an interdisciplinary and international research culture that addresses public art topics. While actively working to maintain diversity in research approaches and priorities, public art research doesn't need to be a separate subfield but rather a vibrant interdisciplinary research area connected to other research questions. Current public art research appears to be in a developmental stage with the mapping of existing knowledge seemingly necessary.

This research investigates the role of government in promoting and supporting public art through case studies from various countries. It finds that governments play a crucial role in driving public art initiatives through a range of policies and laws, such as direct funding allocations, mandating public art spaces in government construction projects, and supporting research. However, challenges and limitations, including centralized power structures and restrictions on artistic freedom of expression, also exist. The research findings offer valuable insights for developing policies and practices to promote public art in Thailand, particularly within the context of sustainable development and community engagement.

Research Results

The research team proposes a novel creative process aimed at advancing public art initiatives. This process offers new knowledge and methodologies to facilitate artistic production. The key findings of this research can be summarized as follows: (1)Novel insights into interdisciplinary artistic collaboration for public art creation: This encompasses both procedural knowledge that can lead to creative output and the utilization of artistic processes to foster social learning. (2) Methodologies within social arts for addressing societal challenges: The research presents methodologies within the domain of social arts that can be employed as solutions or alternatives in response to diverse social crises, aligning with the objectives established by the Program Management Unit for Human Resources & Institutional Development, Research and Innovation (PMU-B). Furthermore, the project team intends to translate these findings into tangible outcomes. Building upon the knowledge acquired from previous projects, the team is prepared to develop concrete policy recommendations to further promote and support the field of public art.

While many countries have successfully implemented policies to promote sustainable public art, Thailand's efforts have been characterized by varying definitions and interpretations, leading to ambiguity and inconsistency. The volatile political climate further complicates reliance on top-down policies, making grassroots initiatives crucial for Thailand. Through our research and public policy forums, we aimed to find solutions and creative methods for public art. The following are key points drawn from our research project:

Research Findings and Policy Implications

The Public Art Project, funded by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) Program Management Unit for Human Resources & Institutional. Development, Research and Innovation (PMU-B), yielded two key findings:

(1) New knowledge on interdisciplinary artistic collaboration for Public Art Project: This includes both process-oriented knowledge leading to creative output and the utilization of artistic processes to foster social learning about health and illness, and promote social healing (social retreat), based on the belief that "arts can help us to heal and rebuild." However, the specific application of public art depends on the desired outcomes and dimensions.

(2) Recommendations for developing creative approaches to public art: These recommendations offer solutions or alternatives for creative work in the arts and creative industries. Beyond economic considerations (value), they emphasize the role of culture and artists in driving social change and addressing societal issues (values). This is contingent upon the supply chain: the production and dissemination of creative works are crucial.

These research findings align with the diverse purposes of public art identified in the literature review. Public art can serve transformative or revitalizing purposes, such as improving a city's image to attract tourists and investment. It can also support community or city activities, becoming a key factor in competing with other cities internationally (Ashworth and Voogt, 1990; Avraham, 2004). Moreover, public art fosters a sense of community (creating shared memories, researcher's note), awareness of local identity, social network develop-

ment, education, and social change (Hall and Robertson, 2001). It promotes cultural diversity and encourages the inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly by providing them with opportunities to participate in the artistic production process (Hall and Smith, 2005). Public art can also signal and support local demands for reform, revitalization, and innovative approaches to space (Wansborough and Mageean, 2000).

Approach to Designing Creative Spaces for Learning and Current Challenges

Thailand possesses the potential and financial resources to organize exhibitions or invest in creative artworks to beautify its cities, as evidenced by the government's ability to effectively mobilize large crowds in coordinated displays during significant festivals. However, a crucial question arises: Is it feasible for the government or funding sources to prioritize arts and culture embedded in people's everyday lives, rather than solely focusing on grand events? Additionally, are these everyday expressions recognized as art, and can they contribute to addressing community challenges? Assistant Professor Dr. Pitch Pongswasdi, during a project debriefing session, suggested that these questions should inform the policy recommendations of future public art projects (Pongswasdi, 2023). Furthermore, when formulating policies or recommendations, researchers must avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead of "cutting the foot to fit the shoe," they should "cut the shoe to fit the foot." In other words, policies should be rooted in the needs and issues of the local community, following a bottom-up approach. Public art creations should draw inspiration from existing cultural elements and undergo critical analysis for further development, adopting a constructive criticism approach. This process should question why certain aspects of everyday life are overlooked by the government and explore the reasons behind the disappearance of certain cultural traditions. Moreover, such projects should facilitate a learning process within the community.

Conservation, Preservation, Creation, and Utilization of Arts and Culture for Public Benefit and Expanding Management from Local to Global Levels

The selection of local arts and culture for learning activities, encompassing both artistic performance skills and language for cultural communication, is crucial for the future of children and youth in the area. In organizing the public art project for this research, the concept of "preserve, deconstruct, create" was utilized as a guideline for managing cultural capital within the area, aiming to further develop cultural and artistic works.

 Preservation (conservation): This involves selecting traditional forms of performances existing in the area and showcasing them to conserve and perpetuate the community's valuable cultural heritage.

Deconstruction: This step entails taking existing performances and modifying them by deconstructing the core elements of the performance. These are then creatively infused with contemporary ideas and relevant issues, using traditional art forms as a tool to communicate with the younger generation.

Creation: This involves integrating various branches of the arts—such as visual arts, music, and performance—to create comprehensive and contemporary art pieces that can effectively communicate in today's world (Boonserm, Saibunmi and Changransu, 2024).

Network-Based Public Management for Sustainable Development (Policy Networks and Sustainability)

In pursuing policy-driven social initiatives, the working group emphasizes the concept of network-based public management for sustainable development. Currently, public art initiatives can range from individual to community levels, but they often lack flexibility and may not be implemented without a supportive supply chain. Addressing the scarcity of resources and management authority in public affairs through collaboration with government agencies, the private sector, and civil society in the form of policy networks is an evolving approach to mitigate various challenges related to efficiency, effectiveness, and democracy in public administration. This approach aligns with the new public management (NPM) concept, which has been continuously challenged by critics (Provan and Milward, 2001).

Furthermore, network-based public management emphasizes defining and analyzing the context for collaborative public decision-making. This focuses on studying the types of networks, power structures, and decision-making processes of key network members. Public administration in the form of policy networks involves collaboration with diverse structural relationships, comprising key actors such as government organizations, private sector organizations, and non-profit organizations (Stokman, 2014). Contemporary public administration necessitates a network-based approach rather than relying solely on individual agencies. Networks consist of multiple organizations with interdependent structures, connected through authority bonds, exchange relations, and common-interest-based coalitions (O'Toole,1997).

Examining the application of policy network theory in Thai public administration reveals that many government officials and academics are interested in the outcomes of network-based management. The primary objective of establishing collaborative efforts is to seek opportunities to improve government agency performance or find ways to enhance efficiency and reduce operational costs. Network-based approaches can contribute to increased capacity and capabilities in implementing public policies. However, it's worth noting that most existing networks focus on natural resource conservation, environmental management, social welfare, economic infrastructure, and public services, rather than promoting education and culture (Krueathep, Riccucci, and Charas, 2010).
Therefore, understanding the interactions of actors and public decision-making influenced by various institutions within complex multi-level governance systems, involving collaboration between local, regional, national, and international entities, is crucial for sustainable development (Lubell, 2015).

In conclusion, policy network theory emphasizes seeking collaboration for public affairs management through networks involving government, private sector, and civil society, utilizing diverse models. The shared objective is to mitigate resource allocation limitations and establish legitimacy in policy decisions, promoting democratic values under good governance principles in public administration to achieve sustainable development goals.

The synthesis of the Public Art Project's work reveals both positive aspects and areas for caution in various dimensions, providing valuable lessons for the working group and insights for future initiatives. The role of the government in supporting public art creation,

and the subsequent impact, including an increase in the number of artworks, employment opportunities for professional artists, and the generation of knowledge that further informs government policies, can be summarized into a comprehensive model of success.

Policy Characteristics:
Several examples illustrate the nature of successful policies:
1. Direct Funding Support: Governments enact policies to promote public art through legislation that directly supports artists' creative endeavors, such as France's Percent for Art Provisions."
2. Mandated Public Art Spaces: Governments mandate the inclusion of public art spaces in public construction projects, beyond direct funding support. For instance, Taiwan's Cultural and Art Reward Act requires a percentage of the total cost of any government construction project to be allocated for procuring and installing public art within the project area or building. Similarly, New York City's Percent for Art law allocates a portion of the budget for construction projects exceeding ten million US dollars towards various art projects within the construction area.
3. Public Participation: Governments actively encourage public participation in the creation of public art. Examples include the New Patrons public art plan in France, a collaboration between the government and private foundations, and Taiwan's practice of holding competitions to select artists for government projects, reflecting a focus on public engagement.
4. Dedicated Agencies: Governments establish dedicated agencies to oversee, promote, and support the creation of public art. Sweden's Public Art Agency of Sweden exemplifies this approach.
5. Research Funding: Governments provide research funding to generate knowledge about public art, informing policy development. Sweden's annual report surveying the state of research related to public art serves as an example.

Policy Pitfalls and Lessons Learned:
However, there are also pitfalls and drawbacks from which we can learn:
1. Centralized Funding: France's legislation exhibits a centralized funding mechanism that may limit accessibility and flexibility.
2. Non-inclusive Artist Selection: Some government processes for selecting artists lack transparency and public participation, raising concerns about fairness.
3. Restrictions on Artistic Expression: Certain cultural and political contexts, such as in Taiwan, may impose restrictions on artists' freedom of expression in public spaces, differing from Western practices.

These international examples offer valuable lessons for Thailand in developing effective and sustainable public art policies, highlighting the importance of balancing government support with community engagement and artistic freedom.

Feasibility of Adapting Successful International Models to Generate Knowledge for Policy Recommendations

The article "Public Art: The State of the Capital City" by Ark Fongsamut (2008) offers valuable insights, revealing previous attempts to promote public art policies during democratic governments, which were subsequently abandoned after the coup d'état. He states that

before 2006, "There were public art projects initiated by the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, which involved public hearings and consultations before drafting plans. It can be said that this was an unprecedented initiative to consider the voices of the people or community. However, this project remained a pilot and was not fully implemented due to the political changes." Therefore, it is feasible to revive such initiatives by learning from international case studies, as discussed in the previous section.

Nevertheless, the outcomes of public art policies (if implemented) can have impacts ranging from the individual level to broader administrative structures. These include: (1) an increase in public artworks; (2) the infusion of communitarian ideas into public art, both in the form of artworks and artistic activities that support education and public participation; (3) the creation of employment opportunities for artists and the elevation of professional standards in the arts through support for artists, art-related professions, academics, and experts; (4) the enhancement of public spaces' aesthetic appeal through public art resulting from these policies; and (5) the contribution to various community and area activities, fostering integration in the future, such as tourism, well-being communities, and strong cultural communities.

Expected Outcomes and Social Impact

1. The creation of public spaces that conserve, preserve, and foster community arts and culture, serving as models for expansion to other areas at the provincial level (if universities have regional aspirations, this can be continued in subsequent years).
2. Sustainable conservation and preservation of community arts and culture through learning processes and knowledge transfer between artists and youth, including enhancing English language skills for cultural communication (long-term impact on the development of children and youth in language and community culture).
3. The establishment of sustainable development networks (policy networks and sustainability) with relevant agencies and stakeholders at both local and national levels.

In summary, the desired policy direction is for the government to provide opportunities for private entities investing in public art projects to receive tax deductions, like other philanthropic endeavors. Additionally, it is hoped that public art initiatives driven by the government will be managed with transparency and environmental responsibility. If the government is to support public art, it should do so at a structural level, such as through urban planning and design, incorporating arts education into everyday life, and establishing tax deduction systems for project sponsors. A dedicated agency or fund should be established to oversee this area, acting as a liaison between the government and private sectors, and managing human resources to ensure professionals in the arts are employed specifically for this purpose.

Furthermore, the project proposes that the government should actively increase public spaces in terms of both quantity and quality, particularly by creating truly public areas in city centers. However, acknowledging that not all these policy requests may be fulfilled, the project focuses on parallel efforts, both through driving cultural learning activities and providing opportunities for people within and outside the community to participate in creating new art accessible to the public within contemporary culture.

Conceptual Framework: Public Art for National Development in Thailand

1. *Public Art at the Core:* Public art serves as the central focus, integrating visual arts, performing arts, and music to create meaningful and impactful experiences in shared spaces.
2. *Interdisciplinary Collaboration:* The overlapping sections represent the collaborative potential between the three art forms. This highlights the importance of breaking down traditional silos and encouraging artists from different disciplines to work together.
3. *Key Concepts Surrounding Public Art:*

    - *Community Engagement:* Public art should involve and reflect the aspirations and concerns of the local community.

    - *Cultural Identity:* It serves as a powerful tool to express and preserve Thailand's rich cultural heritage.

    - *Sustainability:* Public art initiatives should be designed with long-term viability in mind, considering environmental, social, and economic factors.

    - *National Development:* Public art spaces to national development by fostering creativity, enhancing the quality of public spaces, and promoting tourism.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Examples

- *Visual Arts + Performing Arts*: Murals and sculptures can serve as backdrops for dance or theater performances, creating an immersive and dynamic experience.
- *Performing Arts + Music:* Traditional Thai dance and music can be incorporated into public spaces, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and appreciation.
- *Music + Visual Arts:* Interactive sound installations can complement visual artworks, adding another layer of engagement for the audience.
- *All Three Disciplines:* Large-scale festivals or events can showcase the combined power of visual arts, performing arts, and music to create a truly memorable and impactful public art experience.

Sustainable Public Art Initiatives for National Development

- *Community-led Projects:* Empower local communities to participate in the creation and maintenance of public art projects, fostering a sense of ownership and pride.
- *Eco-friendly Materials and Practices*: Utilize sustainable materials and techniques in the creation of public art, minimizing environmental impact.
- *Educational Programs:* Integrate public art into educational initiatives, promoting creativity and cultural understanding among young people.
- *Tourism Promotion:* Develop public art trails and tours to attract visitors and showcase Thailand's unique artistic expressions.
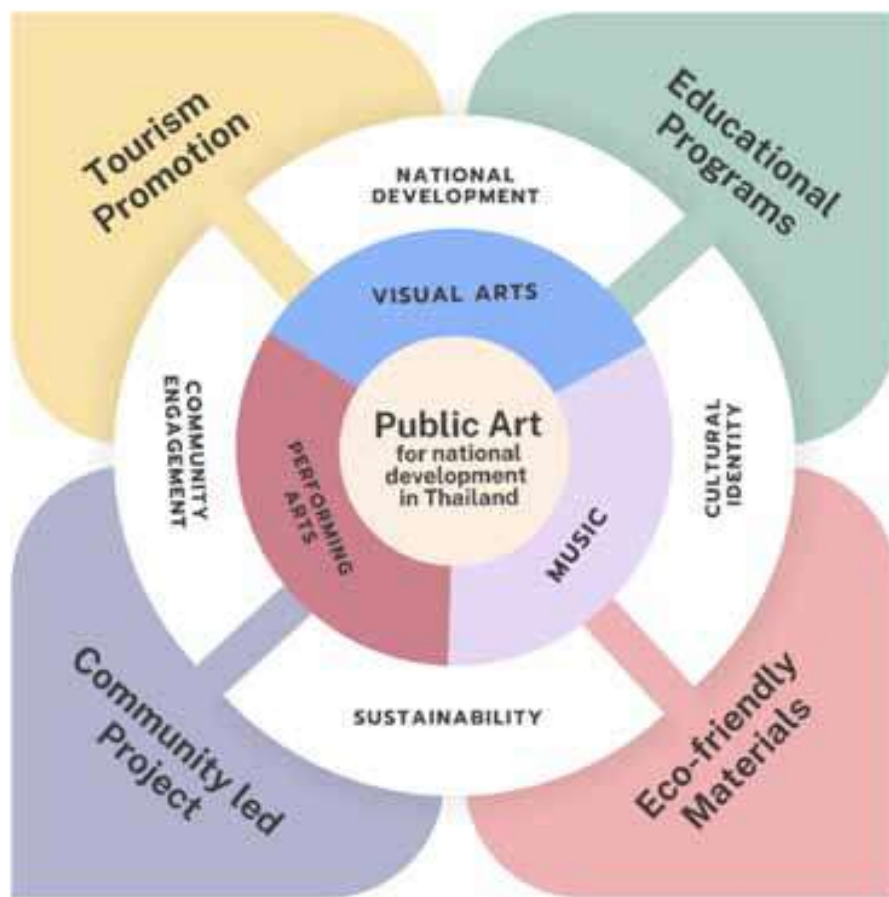
Figure 1. Model Framework for Sustainable Public Art Development in Thailand.

Discussion & Conclusion

This research highlights the potential of public art in Thailand to transcend its aesthetic value and contribute significantly to national development. It underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach that embraces collaborative creativity, community engagement, and sustainable practices.

Key Findings and Implications:

- *Collaborative Creativity*: The study emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary artistic collaboration in creating meaningful public art. This involves not only the creative process but also the utilization of art to promote social learning and community well-being.
- *Social Arts for Societal Challenges*: Public art can offer innovative solutions and alternatives in response to social issues, aligning with the goals of sustainable development. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the effectiveness of public art depends on its specific application and intended outcomes.
- *Policy Recommendations*: Drawing upon successful international models, the research advocates for a supportive policy framework for public art in Thailand. This includes decentralization, community-led initiatives, and the integration of arts into urban planning and everyday life.

- *Sustainable Development Networks:* To ensure long-term viability, fostering sustainable development networks involving government agencies, the private sector & civil society is essential.
- *Cultural Preservation and Communication:* The study stresses the importance of cultural preservation through public art, emphasizing the role of language and cultural communication in fostering understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Challenges and Future Directions:

- *Shifting Perceptions:* A crucial challenge lies in redefining the perceived role of art and artists in society, moving beyond mere beautification to acknowledge their potential for social impact and economic contribution.
- *Community-Centric Approach:* Policies and initiatives should adopt a bottom-up approach, prioritizing the needs and aspirations of local communities. Public art should be rooted in the community's cultural context and facilitate a learning process.
- *Overcoming Implementation Barriers:* While Thailand possesses the resources to support public art, challenges remain in ensuring consistent funding and fostering community understanding of long-term goals.
- *Balancing Policy and Grassroots Efforts:* The volatile political climate in Thailand necessitates a balanced approach that combines top-down policy support with bottom-up, community-driven initiatives.

Overall, this research highlights the transformative potential of public art in Thailand. When grounded in collaboration, sustainability, and community engagement, public art can effectively address social challenges, preserve cultural identity, and promote inclusive national development. By prioritizing these principles, public art becomes a powerful tool for fostering cultural preservation, strengthening social cohesion, and shaping a more vibrant and equitable society.

Recommendations and Future Research Directions

1. *Promotion and Sustainability of Public Art:* Public art initiatives in Thailand should integrate local traditions with contemporary artistic practices, fostering community ownership and cultural preservation. This approach fosters preservation and provides opportunities for ongoing, collaborative work among artists from diverse disciplines. Such a network could ensure sustainability for both artistic livelihoods and the development of innovative performance formats that adapt to pandemic conditions. This would help prevent artist unemployment and enable communities to harness the therapeutic power of art during and after the pandemic, through both preservation and contemporary creation.
2. *Advancement of the Arts through Research and Public Art:* The field of Fine Arts should be broadly developed through knowledge generation, research methodologies, and processes for creating public art. This would enable in-depth artistic creation to address various social issues and facilitate community development through the application of artistic principles.
3. *Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Cultural Welfare:* Arts and culture initiatives should transcend individual organizations or ministries, fostering inter-ministerial collaboration that recognizes the value of "cultural workers." This specialized field, with its

diverse sub-disciplines within the cultural and creative industries, requires integra-
tion with economic and security sectors. Cultural welfare initiatives and decentralized
community-led management should be implemented to ensure community well-being.

4. *Policy Advocacy for Sustainable Public Art:* Public policies should be promoted to ensure
    the sustainability of public art, building upon and expanding Sustainable Development
    Goal 11. The development of creative spaces for community-based arts and cultural
    learning should lead to national policies that promote such spaces. This includes
    strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
    (SDG 11.4) and creating sustainable supply chains for traditional performing arts.

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