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Communication-Driven Creative Placemaking and Cultural Tourism for Advancing SDG 8, 11, 12, and 17: Co-Designing a Terracotta Pot Check-In Point in Koh Kret, Thailand

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Abstract

This study explores the design and implementation of a terracotta pot-based check-in point as a community-driven social innovation in Koh Kret, Thailand. Situated within a culturally rich locality known for its traditional pottery, the project integrates principles of visual communication, place-based storytelling, and participatory design to create a physical landmark that functions as both a tourism attraction and a cultural medium. Through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, local artisans, community leaders, and university researchers collaborated to co-design the check-in structure using recycled terracotta materials. The result is a visually engaging space that promotes community identity, stimulates cultural tourism, and encourages social media interaction through user-generated content. The project not only increases economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride among residents. Findings indicate that the check-in point acts as a communicative space, transforming the built environment into a storytelling platform that strengthens local identity. The initiative directly supports multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). The study concludes that culturally rooted, co-designed spatial media can serve as effective tools for sustainable development, particularly in semi-urban communities. It offers a scalable model for creative placemaking, community empowerment, and policy-oriented innovation that bridges local wisdom with global development frameworks.

Keywords: Social innovation, community-based design, visual communication, sustainable tourism, SDGs, place as media, Koh Kret

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Introduction

Koh Kret, situated in Nonthaburi Province, is an island community in the Chao Phraya River, noted for its cultural importance and as an example of sustainable cultural heritage management. This site functions as a traditional pottery production area for the Mon people, who migrated during the Ayutthaya period and have maintained their distinctive pottery-making skills to the present (Wongsa, 2020). Koh Kret pottery's unique techniques and creative shapes reflect the Mon people. The item uses clay kilns in its manufacturing process and has finely carved designs. The chosen goods are important cultural treasures that help the local economy by promoting cultural tourism and creative projects (Chuthamas et al., 2022). Koh Kret is a relevant case of sustainable development that shows the trade-off between cultural preservation and financial viability. The sub-district administrative body coordinated the administration while the community participated in the community cultural conservation initiative. As a result, knowledge was exchanged, and more young people took part (Sinsuwan & Laopongharn, 2021).

Koh Kret shows how media and cultural interchange can enhance one another to help local communities' long-term development and improvement in the face of globalization.

The cultural value of Koh Kret, alongside its renowned ceramics, presents challenges in establishing communication channels and attractions for tourists, particularly as visitor travel patterns evolve and necessitate engagement with community culture. Culturally distinctive regions on Koh Kret struggle to manage materials and implement modern technologies, reducing visitor awareness and impressions, impeding cultural values' transmission (Boonchai & Promphakping, 2021). Insufficient display infrastructure, inadequate cultural interpretation, and limited digital engagement with consumers hinder the advancement of community brands that influence regional and global contexts (Govers & Go, 2016). These obstacles underscore the importance of creating "*cultural communication spaces*" that integrate stories and technology within local contexts to generate lasting and meaningful travel experiences for visitors.

For cultural tourism to flourish in an era of ubiquitous digital and social media, one important strategy is to create "*check-in points*" or specific spots that invite visitors to take photos and videos and share them online. In addition to serving as photo spots, check-in points are also "*physical media*" that convey the unique value of an area and use symbolic design to connect the story of the place with visitors' memories and community culture (Crouch & Desforges, 2003). To enhance visitor experiences and develop online storytelling, digital media provided by tourists should integrate art,

architecture, local materials, and digital technology (Manovich, 2020). In addition, local communities can increase their pride in their community's cultural heritage and generate income from tourism through check-in points. In addition, community participation in the creative and design process will create a sense of love, cherishment, and ownership from local people (Zhang et al., 2021). Overall, check-in points created by integrating media and design can enhance tourist attraction presentation and effectively digitally preserve and communicate cultural identity.

Social innovation is an important framework for community development in contemporary society, mainly where structural solutions cannot solely depend on the state but require multi-sectoral collaboration and genuine local participation (Murray et al., 2010). Furthermore, Koh Kret, which is recognized for its pottery potential and long history, is a substantial social capital and an opportunity to apply social innovation to design sustainable development processes. It can be achieved by establishing "*cultural check-in points*" that effectively integrate media, design, and local narratives. These check-in points serve as photographic locations and communication platforms that facilitate cross-cultural learning, enhance community identity, and support the grassroots economy (Zhang et al., 2021; Manovich, 2020).

The development of these spatial innovations is regarded as a form of social innovation, emerging from social mobilization, the ingenuity of local designers, and the application of digital technology to enhance accessibility and interactive communication. Social innovation covers products and spaces and includes community participation and collaborative learning processes between government agencies, educational institutions, and tourists. This project is a collaboration between many parties, including the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Shinawatra University, Pak Kret Subdistrict Administrative Organization, the Agricultural Promotion Bank, and the tourism community enterprise of Koh Kret Subdistrict, which is considered the core of development that emphasizes equality and participation (Phills et al., 2008; Nicholls et al., 2015). The application of social innovation concepts to the design of cultural spaces on Koh Kret has the potential to promote tourism as a mechanism for structural change and promote sustainable community development.

Community engagement in tourist development, cultural tourism, and place-based communication has been the subject of substantial research. While some studies have looked at the potential for "*design*" and "*creative media*" to lead to meaningful cultural experiences, most have focused on economics or resource management (Richards, 2020; Boonchai & Promphakping, 2021). The lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework that integrates modern media technology, community, and cultural capital into a framework that includes "*social innovation*", and "*cultural spatial*

development” is a significant problem (Phills et al., 2008; Nicholls et al., 2015). Furthermore, there is a lack of specific case studies demonstrating how “check-in point design” can promote digital participation, community empowerment, and cultural communication that contribute to sustainable development, especially in a culturally unique place such as Koh Kret. Overall, this study is an additional study that integrates social innovation, design arts, and communication science to fill the gap in previous research to expand further how modern cultural destinations can be designed with creative approaches to meet visitor needs, promote intercultural understanding, and ensure that these destinations can continue to be sustainable in the long term.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate and develop a culturally grounded “check-in point” as a communicative space that embodies the unique identity of the Ko Kret community. The research is situated within social innovation, participatory design, and cultural communication to enhance local heritage value through spatial and visual media. This study used a pragmatic research methodology, combining community participation with creative design processes, to gain theoretical insights and practical outcomes. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To study the cultural capital and material history of the Koh Kret community, especially Mon pottery fragments, to help create spatial stories that represent local identity.
2. To develop and create a prototype for a “cultural check-in point” using site-specific media and interactive visual communication features that act as both a physical landmark and a symbolic medium for tourists.
3. To assess the socio-cultural and communication impacts of the check-in point on local people, visitors, and stakeholders regarding historical presentation, experiential tourism, and community pride.
4. To develop a framework for establishing a creative cultural site that integrates local knowledge, media design, and ongoing community participation for a site rich in cultural heritage.

Literature Review

This creative research necessitates establishing a foundation derived from concepts and studies across multiple dimensions, including design, cultural communication, community engagement, and the sustainable development of social spaces. This is particularly relevant in developing a “*Cultural Check-in Point*” that

leverages the local cultural capital of the Koh Kret community, an area distinguished by its unique cultural attributes and artisanal expertise. Consequently, the literature was examined across four primary dimensions: the notion of cultural place-making and local identity, participatory design in community-oriented creative initiatives, visual communication and media concerning cultural heritage interpretation, and social innovation as a paradigm for sustainable development. Each dimension contributes to methodically delineating the concept and facilitating the design process of this research.

Making Cultural Places and Feeling Like a Local

Cultural place-making means that space is more than a place where things are put away. It is a place rebuilt through social and cultural meanings that show who the community is (Cresswell, 2015). Especially in areas with specific cultural capital, such as Koh Kret, developing local areas into “*cultural check-in points*” is about managing spaces to attract tourists and creating spaces that share meaning as representatives of local heritage and history (Richards, 2020). These check-in points are thus “*symbolic spaces*” that connect memories with contemporary tourists’ perceptions (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Participatory Design in Community-Based Creative Projects

Participatory design emphasizes giving the public, especially community members, an important role in designing processes, products, or spaces that are relevant to them (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). This approach is appropriate in cultural tourism development because it facilitates in-depth participation and promotes a sense of ownership. Furthermore, it led to the sustainability of the use of that area (Zhang et al., 2021). In the case of Koh Kret, inviting the community to participate in the selection of local materials, such as pottery shards, and designing check-in points as representatives of culture is a strategy that links identity with social participation (Duxbury et al., 2021).

The visually interesting check-in points design affects tourist attractions and enhances cultural perception, especially when using storytelling strategies and visual placement in real spaces (Gupta et al., 2018). This approach promotes “*Heritage Communication*,” where visitors can participate and expand on the meaning through sharing images and stories on online media.

Heritage Interpretation, Visual Communication, and Media

Visual and contemporary media can help communicate cultural heritage, encourage recognition, and engage digital audiences, especially when physical spaces are designed as cultural interfaces that tell stories through images and symbols (Manovich, 2020).

Social Innovation as a Framework for Sustainable Development

Social innovation refers to creating new processes or approaches to solve complex social problems, emphasizing social capital, cooperation, and participation as the core (Phills et al., 2008). In terms of cultural space development, social innovation is not limited to technology or material products but also includes “joint learning processes” between the public sector, the state, educational institutions, and designers to create spaces that meet the needs of users in terms of culture, society, and economy (Nicholls et al., 2015). Creating cultural check-in points based on local materials, co-design processes, and communication through media is a concrete example of creative social innovation that supports sustainable community development.

The current research indicates that sustainable community tourism initiatives have led to more research exploring the relationship between cultural identity, spatial communication, and social innovation. The concept of cultural placemaking is central to this research, as Cresswell (2015) argues. This study emphasizes the importance of transforming, renovating, and developing local places into symbols that have historical power and reflect community identity. The case of the Koh Kret community, which is famous for its unique pottery and handicrafts from the Mon people who migrated during the Ayutthaya period, and other similar places, can benefit from creating a “*cultural check-in point*.” This innovation also serves to promote mutual understanding and respect among diverse populations. Past research has indicated that heritage tourism should change from a merely tourist activity to one emphasizing the development of compelling narratives to involve travelers and inspire them to write their own stories (Richards, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

This transition originates from participatory design, a methodology that integrates local individuals’ ideas, memories, and viewpoints into developing cultural artifacts and environments (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). The community-driven ceramic storytelling initiative at Ko Kret allows visitors to engage in local culture while enhancing community pride. Visual and media communication is essential to increase cultural sites’ visibility, recognition, and symbolic significance. As Manovich (2020) suggests, media should be aesthetic and help individuals understand their environment by analyzing community images and media platforms. Research on planning social institution development through physical culture, community-based

participatory development at community heritage sites, and social innovation to enhance creative tourism remains limited.

Limited research has examined community development plans that emphasize local innovations derived from historic sites, focusing on legislation, economics, and the preservation of cultural legacies. This study fills a gap in previous research by examining the feasibility of site-specific design and development of cultural innovations in communication using local material culture and stories developed through community participation to promote community tourism as a source of income and create sustainable economic growth for the community.

Design Framework

This research’s “Cultural Check-in Point” design is based on amalgamating knowledge across three primary dimensions: cultural capital and local materials, community participation in the design process, and the idea of spaces as cultural mediums. These three characteristics align with modern design, communication, and sustainable community development theories, particularly regarding social innovation.

The conceptual foundation for this study’s design approach emerged from an interdisciplinary synthesis of theories in cultural geography, participatory design, visual communication, and social innovation. These frameworks were integrated to inform the creation of a cultural check-in point that functions not merely as a tourism attraction but as a communicative and symbolic space for cultural expression. Table 1 illustrates the theoretical grounding, key concepts, and their practical application to the design of the check-in point at Ko Kret, highlighting how each conceptual dimension contributed to shaping the spatial, visual, and participatory strategies employed in the project.

No.	Core Concept / Theory	Source	Key Idea	Application in Design
1	Cultural Place-making	Cresswell (2015); Richards (2020)	Space becomes meaningful through cultural narratives and engagement, not merely physical form.	The check-in point is a landmark through symbolic and expressing identity through localized materials, form, and spatial context.
2	Participatory Design	Sanders & Stappers (2008); Zhang et al. (2021)	Design should involve users and stakeholders, particularly communities, ownership and sustainability.	The community selected local materials, shaped the narrative, and co-created design elements for the check-in point.

No.	Core Concept / Theory	Source	Key Idea	Application in Design
3	Visual Communication in Cultural Space	Manovich (2020); Gupta et al. (2018)	Visual and spatial design can be a cultural interface, enabling meaning-making and social sharing.	Design integrated traditional pottery motifs and visually compelling elements optimized for interaction and social media sharing.
4	Social Innovation	Phills et al. (2008); Nicholls et al. (2015)	Innovation that responds to social needs through collaboration, empowerment, and cultural transformation	The check-in point is a socially driven output, merging cultural heritage and with tourism and community development in a sustainable model.

Table 1. Derivation of Design Concepts for the Cultural Check-in Point

The table indicates that design concepts originate not from a singular inspiration but are fundamentally grounded in distinct academic theories and frameworks, categorized into four primary axes:

Cultural capital and indigenous resources

The design commenced with an examination of the cultural capital of the Koh Kret community, renowned for its Mon pottery craftsmanship. Symbolic and historical local narratives can be communicated through previously overlooked artifacts, such as “pottery sherds,” which have recently been reassessed as cultural treasures. Integrating these items into check-in point designs fosters sustainable resource utilization and enhances community cultural significance (Cresswell, 2015; Richards, 2020).

Native resources and cultural assets

The design approach began with an analysis of the cultural capital of the Koh Kret community, which is famous for its Mon pottery crafts. Therefore, the design of this piece is a reused object, such as “pottery fragments”, which are the community’s identity and cultural assets that convey the history and symbols of the area.

Space as a cultural medium

Designed check-in points are seen as “cultural interface spaces” that have the potential to communicate the identity of the space through physical elements such as structure, materials, patterns, and layouts, as well as designs that allow visitors to interact, take photos, and share them on digital media, which helps expand cultural awareness on a broader scale (Manovich, 2020; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Community engagement in the design process

The principle of participatory design was utilized to involve communities throughout the process from conception to manufacturing. The check-in point signifies the apex of authentic collaboration among academics, designers, artisans, and local communities. This approach promotes a sense of community ownership and helps foster awareness of preserving community culture in a way conducive to its continued development (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Zhang et al., 2021). Thus, for this community service project, the design concept is more than just construction or sculpture, but also part of a participatory process of cultural communication driven by social innovation (Phills et al., 2008; Nicholls et al., 2015), systematically incorporating aesthetic, symbolic, and participatory elements that can be flexibly and sustainably adapted to diverse cultural contexts.

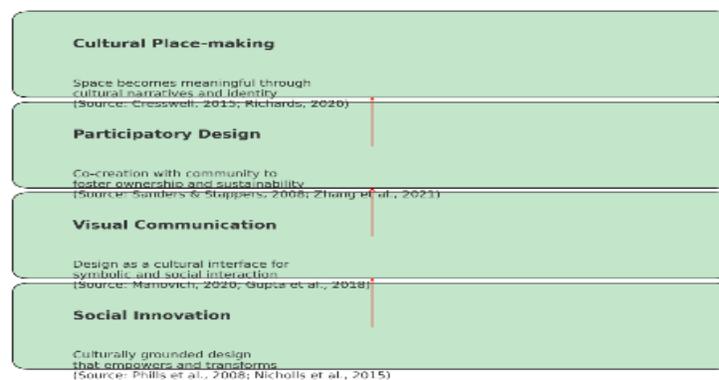


Figure 1 illustrates the integrated conceptual framework guiding the design of a cultural check-in point at Ko Kret, incorporating theoretical perspectives on cultural place-making, participatory design, visual communication, and social innovation.

Methodology

This qualitative study used a participatory action research (PAR) approach. This approach is appropriate for cultural contexts that facilitating collaborative knowledge creation among local stakeholders (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). The study was conducted in Koh Kret Subdistrict, Nonthaburi Province, Thailand, famous for its Mon pottery and cultural tourism. The researchers used a purposeful sampling strategy to integrate user-based, cultural, and experiential data (Patton, 2015).

Data generation, validation, and collaborative design development were conducted using various qualitative tools to ensure methodological rigor. The researchers conducted participant observation to examine social life, material culture, and the influence of pottery on spatial expressions and interactions, as well as informal rituals that contribute to local place identification. This interactive project approach

helped tourists and locals understand how cultural spaces were managed. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 prominent community members, including artisans, folk philosophers, local academics, youth, and cultural practitioners. The interviews revealed descriptive understandings of the site, its cultural value, symbolic significance, and community perspectives on tourism development.

Based on the research of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the semi-structured interview process helped to establish consistency in the data and to generate design themes during the design process. The researchers created three distinct discussion groups to generate ideas, validate ideas, and enhance memory. The participants' feedback improved the check-in point's visual appeal and organizational structure on the initial design (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The focus groups repurposed intangible cultural data to improve the design's attractiveness to residents and visitors. Additionally, local children, community leaders, and residents participated in participatory workshops to build the check-in point's materials, structures, and visual identity. The significant usage of ceramic items in the area allowed for visual storytelling, which was interesting. The principles of this design approach include sustainable reuse of materials and symbolic cultural expression (Gupta et al., 2018; Richards, 2020).

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) assessed all qualitative data using four dimensions: cultural symbols, social values, participatory experiences, and sense of place. The researchers used this interpretive approach to extract meaning from the data sources and propose design solutions that enhance community identity and facilitate visitor access.

Socially engaged research and international approaches to heritage design guide this approach. This initiative is situated within a broader cultural trend that emphasizes place-aware innovation, community agency, and narrative expression (Duxbury et al., 2021; Phills, 2008; Amran Rasli, Zhou Fei, Imelda Hermilinda Abas, McXin Tee, Silvi Asna Prestianawati, Surianti Lajuma, Rorlinda Yusof, .2024).



Figure 2. The Research Methodology for Cultural Check-in Point Design at Ko Kret

Results

The research findings reveal a multi-dimensional impact resulting from the participatory design of a cultural check-in point in Ko Kret, Nonthaburi. The results are categorized into four major themes: community engagement in the design process, tangible design outcomes, visitor responses, and broader social implications.

Community Engagement in the Design Process

The participatory design process enabled active collaboration between researchers, artisans, and community leaders. Through workshops and focus group discussions, participants co-created the design concept, selected meaningful local materials, especially pottery fragments, and contributed to the aesthetic and symbolic elements of the final structure. This inclusive process enriched the design with cultural narratives and cultivated a sense of ownership and pride among local stakeholders.





Figure 3. Community Participation Process through Focus Group Discussions



Figure 4. Community Participation Process through Workshops

This figure illustrates the participatory engagement process undertaken with the local community in Ko Kret. The process involved collaborative workshops and structured focus group discussions, enabling residents, artisans, and cultural stakeholders to contribute ideas, share knowledge, and co-create the design concept for the cultural check-in point.

Tangible Design Outcome: The Check-in Point

The final output was a visually striking check-in point structure constructed from recycled Mon pottery fragments, symbolizing the community's heritage. The structure features embedded patterns, traditional motifs, and informative signage in a high-traffic cultural area. It serves as both a physical landmark and a storytelling medium, inviting visitors to engage with the site's cultural context. (A photographic illustration of the complete check-in point is provided in Figure 5)



Figure 5. The photographic illustration of the complete check-in point

Visitor Responses and Behavioral Insights

Qualitative feedback from tourists indicated high interest and appreciation for the site's authenticity and symbolic representation. Visitors reported being intrigued by pottery in the structure and frequently shared images on social media platforms, reinforcing the site's function as both a cultural interface and social media attraction. Observational data confirmed prolonged engagement, with many visitors taking time to read interpretive signs and photograph the design elements.

Qualitative data collected through interviews with five tourists revealed rich insights into visitor perceptions, experiences, and behaviors related to the cultural check-in point. These participants, diverse in age and background, provided responses that underscored both emotional engagement and critical appreciation.

A 34-year-old female tourist commented, "I did not expect to find something this artistic in a local community. The pottery shards reminded me of traditional Thai aesthetics, but in a fresh and modern way." Another university student participant reflected, "It is

very Instagrammable, but not in a superficial way. There is depth in the design, and when I read about the story behind it, I felt more connected to the place.”

A third interviewee, a middle-aged visitor from Bangkok, noted, “I usually skip touristy check-in spots, but this one felt authentic. You can see the local touch in the details; it is not mass-produced.” Similarly, a retired couple traveling from Chiang Mai mentioned that the design “resonated with the area’s culture.” They appreciated the educational signage explaining the pottery fragments’ symbolic use.

Lastly, a Gen Z traveler highlighted the social media appeal: “I took many pictures here and shared them. My friends were curious and asked where this was. It is not just beautiful, it is meaningful.”

Participant	Key Observation	Thematic Insight
Female, Age 34	Pottery fragments reflect Thai aesthetics in a contemporary perspective.	Cultural identity and design using local materials.
University Student	The check-in point is photogenic but also meaningful, enhanced by storytelling.	Engagement through storytelling and emotional connection.
A visitor from Bangkok	Felt authenticity and community craftsmanship in the design details.	Authenticity and connection to local context.
Retired Couple from Chiang Mai	Praised the cultural interpretation through informative signage.	Cultural learning through accessible interpretive content.
Gen Z Tourist	Shared multiple photos; perceived both beauty and meaningfulness.	Amplification through social media and experiential sharing.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Tourist Interviews

Thematic synthesis of these interviews confirmed three main patterns:

1. *Authenticity and Local Identity* – Visitors consistently noted that the design reflected genuine cultural heritage.
2. *Engagement through Storytelling* – Interpretive signage and visual cues encouraged deeper interaction and learning.
3. *Social Media Amplification* – The visual design effectively promoted digital sharing, expanding the site’s visibility.

These findings support the fact that the check-in point functioned as a photogenic attraction and a cultural interface that fostered personal reflection and public dissemination. It bridged aesthetic appeal with cultural education, creating a more meaningful and memorable visitor experience.

Social and community benefits

The social impacts on the Koh Kret community were numerous and varied due to the participatory design and implementation project. Field observations and in-depth interviews with 10 key stakeholders, including community leaders such as local craftsmen and tourists, confirmed these impacts. Cultural sensitivity, strengthening

local identity, and stimulating the creative economy were three key areas supported by the collected evidence.

The cultural significance of local materials and skills was brought to the attention of community members through this initiative. As part of the collaborative design process, villagers became aware of the cultural significance of discarded pottery, elevating it from a discarded object into a heritage symbol, creating a sense of ownership. As one key local community member said, *“This check-in point represents our community,”* said an interviewee. What was once considered useless has become a source of pride for the community. This approach supported the principles of community-oriented heritage revitalization by fostering group thinking and an appreciation for cultural traditions. The design process strengthened local identity by creating a tangible, shareable artifact from intangible legacy (such as memory, tradition, and technique). Participants in the workshops reported feeling a renewed sense of cultural pride. *“Working with people from different backgrounds brought attention to the special qualities of our craft,”* one craftsman said. The check-in format allowed storytelling to transcend generations and physically manifested Mon’s cultural identity through narrative components and visual language.

The project accelerated innovative economic initiatives. Installing the check-in station boosted tourist engagement and foot traffic in the area. Nearby artisans profited, and the community reinvestment in artistic production was fostered. According to one traveler, the explanatory placards connected us to the location. Insightful and moving all at once. The design’s aesthetic appeal encouraged photo sharing on social media, particularly among younger participants, increasing its visibility and impact beyond the venue.

In conclusion, the check-in point fostered long-term, regional development while acting as a cultural symbol. Involving locals, drawing in cultural tourists, and encouraging inclusive development proved that participatory design and spatial media might materialize intangible heritage.

Discussions

Theoretical and Practical Analysis of Outcomes

Creating check-in points on Koh Kret using clay pots demonstrates a visual storytelling method, a social innovation, and storytelling that can be integrated into the physical design of the place under the framework of local culture. The study results indicate that communication and symbolic creation in the local context from

community participation can promote and reflect the community's cultural identity through digital content and storytelling.

The results, say Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013), clarify that communication creates meaning and that visitors derive social and personal value from interacting with symbolic components in the physical environment. As a communicative artifact, the check-in point promotes emotional connection and enhances group identity in public.

The concept has been effective in creating visually appealing locations, enabling the photography and digital distribution of community spaces, increasing the number of tourists, and improving the tourism business in the community, resulting in increased sales. It indicates that designing places linked to cultural identity can be a way for communities to express themselves and a tool for marketing themselves.

Strengths of "Place as Media" Communication

Couldry and McCarthy (2004) state that the terracotta check-in structure functions as "place as media," which means that it enables symbolic transmission through the physical shape that it takes. With the site's haptic and visual experience, visitors are encouraged to contribute meaning with social networking and personal photographs. The expression and transmission of one's identity occurs in the real world, as opposed to digital media or traditional signage.

In the case of Koh Kret, the use of terracotta pots, a material closely related to native Mon pottery traditions, transforms the check-in area into a narrative environment. It attracts attention and communicates the community's individuality to outsiders. As a result, the check-in points links cultural legacy and current media activity, particularly regarding tourism and user-generated content.

The structure of the terracotta check-in points acts as a "place as media", facilitating the transmission of symbols through physical design (Couldry & McCarthy, 2004). The visual and tactile elements of the place encourage travelers to participate by creating meaning through photography and sharing on social media. Unlike general signboards or digital media, the Koh Kret check-in point acts as a physical space that serves as a medium for expressing and conveying the identity of the Koh Kret community. The use of terracotta pots, which are intrinsically linked to the pottery tradition of the indigenous Mon community, turns the Koh Kret check-in point into a story scene, attracting attention and conveying the community's identity to outsiders. It can be said that the check-in points link cultural heritage and contemporary media participation, especially with community tourism and user-generated content. (Jaipak, B., Bhurichotitham, S., & Inkong, P., 2025).

Social Innovation: Collaboration, Creativity, and Self-Reliance

Social creativity is built on working together, being creative, and being independent. Community members were involved in every step of this project, from coming up with ideas, choosing materials for building it, to keeping it up to date. It is an example of design-thinking-based local social innovation. It makes people feel proud and prosperous, supporting long-term growth (Mulgan, 2006; Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

The community-based collaborative design method aims to get people in the area to think of new ideas. Entrepreneurs, youth groups, craftspeople, and folk thinkers are all in this group. Common materials with historical ties, like clay, can give people in the community a sense of control and pride. It fits with how people think about inventions, who say it is not something that comes from nowhere, but a process involving many people. The effects bring more attention to businesses and cultural events and teach people how to use media and technology better. (Mishra, R., Mishra, A., Tiwari, V., & Jain, R. K., 2024).

Policy suggestions and related research

This project fits with world models supporting affordable, culturally sensitive digital solutions for underprivileged areas, such as the Smart Villages Project (UNESCAP, 2021) and the OECD Digital Platform for Local Development (OECD, 2020). The relevance of such models to development lends credibility to the field of communication for development studies, demonstrating the parallel functions of spatial storytelling as an infrastructural tool and public media for storytelling. For policy recommendations, government agencies should endorse prominent check-in programs to promote cultural tourism and sustainable social innovation.

Funding mechanisms should prioritize measurable cultural and social outcomes over technical deliverables. Community training curricula of capacity-building programs should incorporate design thinking, media literacy, and participatory communication. The BCG Economy framework of Thailand should be used to scale the check-in model and to integrate it with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

In summary, the check structure is not merely relying on being visually appealing; it is a social platform that fosters community empowerment, identification, and narrative, all of which contribute to sustainable development through the influence of place-based communication.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Integrated with SDG Alignment and Policy Learning

Summary of Key Concepts and Findings

Design of public spaces that integrate communication theories. The design of the Koh Kret check-in point, emphasizing community participation and cultural identity development, is an example of a check-in point with a clay pot concept on Koh Kret. The check-in points structure acts as a medium of communication that conveys the historical stories of the community, expresses local identity, and promotes social interaction. The project brings in many tourists, which is good for the local economy and helps build community pride, self-representation, and cultural knowledge. Combining work on building public spaces and telling stories into one project makes people more committed to using grassroots innovation for long-term growth.

Ways to Copy and Grow Things

This style of design is prevalent, so it can be changed and expanded to fit a lot of different cultural settings, like artistic areas, heritage artisan towns, and heritage communities. Working together on design and telling stories based on place is important because it brings out what makes each place special. Using open design principles, considering community co-ownership, and planning public spaces with local tales in mind can all help copy projects last longer. Towns like these welcome culture vultures while preserving their identities.

Using Media and Design for Spatial Development

This project illustrates how a place can function as a medium, a powerful channel for cultural communication and shared meaning-making. In the digital era, where tourists frequently photograph and share their experiences on social media, the design of meaningful check-in points presents an opportunity to generate visibility, emotional connection, and economic benefits.

Such design interventions transcend aesthetics and function as cultural platforms that reflect local communities' values, traditions, and aspirations. This model can be extended to public space activation, community-based tourism planning, and heritage conservation projects.

Theory and Policy Development of Learning

This project integrates community-based participatory research with local government administration to create a reusable cultural communication prototype

that educational institutions can use as a lesson in various topics to raise awareness and develop knowledge about culture, education, and creativity. The training courses to develop learning from this project, such as training on creative social identity design, a project to develop a prototype of creative urban planning, and a project to train citizens in communication for development activities, all target the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to promoting creative cities with community culture, central and local government organizations should support using participatory design concepts in local development. It can also be used as a guideline for policy making that tests regional approaches to architecture in less populated areas.

Consistent with SDG and Sustainable Development

This approach closely aligns with Thailand’s Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economic model, which emphasizes integrating culture, innovation, and sustainability to strengthen local economies. It reflects a community-driven development model that can be applied domestically and internationally to drive sustainable development goals in a meaningful and localized way. The project is also aligned with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, as shown in Table 3

Table 3 shows the consistency of the Koh Kret Check-in Point project with sustainable development.

SDG	Target	Implementation in the Project
SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities	11.4 – Strengthen cultural and natural heritage	Designed a cultural check-in space reflecting local heritage and accessible to all visitors
	11.7 – Provide inclusive public spaces	
SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth	8.3 – Support community-based enterprises	Stimulated local entrepreneurship and enhanced tourism-led income generation
	8.9 – Promote sustainable tourism	
SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production	12.5 – Reduce waste through reuse	Used recycled terracotta materials and incorporated cultural education via design elements
	12.8 – Raise public awareness on sustainable practices	

SDG	Target	Implementation in the Project
SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals	17.16 – Enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships	Developed through collaboration between the university, local authorities, artisans, and entrepreneurs using participatory research (PAR)
	17.17 – Encourage collaboration among sectors	

Koh Kret Check-in Point supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to create sustainable communities and urban areas, making communities safer, more diverse, and more vibrant. The project focuses on creating public spaces where residents can come together and celebrate their cultural heritage through the communication of cultural identity. The Koh Kret Check-in Point looks nice and uses cultural symbols to tell stories. It attracts tourists who want to learn about the community’s past and helps people from different backgrounds interact in this public space. Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Plan can be reached with this plan. Economic growth and fair work are global demands. This idea helps small businesses gain more customers and money by allowing tourists to buy locally produced products and community products, expand creative tourism, and strengthen local economies by promoting inclusive and sustainable local growth, which leads to communities’ strength in self-development.

Using waste materials from broken clay from the kiln is good for the world. It meets Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible production and consumption, showing how creative people can be when they use waste to create cultural art. This project teaches locals and tourists about caring for the planet and the circular economy.

Partnerships for Goals (SDG 17) show how businesses, schools, local governments, and community craftsmen can work together to achieve the goal. The project’s Participatory Action Research (PAR) study suggests that communities can conceive and pursue long-term development ideas with the help of inter-agency teamwork and collaborative networks.

The project’s sustainability demonstrates that ideas generated within communities can impact global sustainability goals. The project provides a framework for innovative urban planning. This plan combines collaborative governance, resource optimization, economic empowerment, and heritage protection. The project integrates a variety of policy and educational institutions, and its outcomes serve as an example of how local social innovation can support long-term growth at the national level.

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