

Critical Participatory Action Research for Revitalizing

Local Music and Performing Arts in the Post-Pandemic Transition of Salaya

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Abstract

This study employs Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) to examine the adaptive revitalization of local music and performing arts in Salaya's post-pandemic transition. Through the Collaborative Cultural Action Network (CCAN – comprising artists, academics, administrators, and citizens – the research facilitates a collaborative ecosystem for cultural asset co-creation. Implementation operates across two levels: strategic management of intersubjective agreements, and artistic creativity via a dual-track strategy. This strategy combines active conservation of *phleng lae*, *phleng ruea*, *lakhon chatri*, *likay*, and *trae wong* with creative deconstruction, specifically the *luk thung* song “Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya” and the *Kanlapaphruek* project. Findings demonstrate that peri-urban cultural resilience is achieved through community agency, shifting residents from passive participants to active co-designers. Recommendations advocate institutionalizing sustainability through local policy integration, preserving living expressions while fostering artistic fluidity and responsiveness to unpredictable volatility.

Keywords: Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR), Local Music, Performing Arts, Community Agency, Active Conservation, Creative Deconstruction

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented global crisis, profoundly disrupted social interactions and cultural practices, particularly impacting the transmission of Intangible Cultural heritage (ICH) and the vitality of community-based cultural events (UNESCO, 2021). As societies grapple with ongoing health uncertainties and the emergence of novel infectious diseases (WHO, 2023), the critical reassessment of cultural engagement strategies – specifically those designed to mitigate activity cessation and restore communal well-being – is imperative. While existing literature acknowledges the pandemic's impact on cultural sectors and various restorative efforts have been implemented, there remains a parallel necessity to address the social and spiritual suffering at the grassroots level, characterized by the enforced silence of communal spaces and the severance of cultural transmission lines. Furthermore, a significant research gap exists in understanding how peri-urban communities (McGee, 1991), such as the Salaya sub-district, Phutthamonthon district, Nakhon Pathom province in central Thailand, adapt and sustain their local music and performing arts. These communities serve as critical transition zones where rapid urbanization directly intersects with deep-rooted, agrarian cultural practices and collective festivities, making them uniquely vulnerable to rapid cultural erosion when crises destabilize their transitioning social fabrics. Consequently, socio-cultural resilience within these areas becomes a vital indicator of a community's capacity to navigate developmental pressures, underscoring that the adaptive revitalization of cultural festivities is as fundamental to the communal heart and stability as economic or infrastructural development in an increasingly volatile and unpredictable world.

This study addresses the aforementioned gaps through a flagship frontier research initiative supported by the Program Management Unit for Human Resources & Institutional Development, Research and Innovation (PMU-B). The project investigates the interplay between cultural resilience and collaborative creativity, prioritizing the intrinsic value of the arts in addressing social challenges over mere economic metrics. As Schippers (2016) asserts, the vitality of musical practices depends significantly on a community's capacity to maintain cultural relevance. This stance is further reinforced by Schippers and Seeger (2022), who emphasize the necessity of bridging the gap between global intangible cultural heritage ideologies and the lived realities of musical practices. Within this framework, effective cultural sustainability is understood as inherently responsive to social and cultural shifts; thus, this inherent artistic fluidity underscores the importance of adapting traditions to contemporary contexts while preserving their core essence. For practitioners, this implies that cultural activities must remain flexible, empowering artists to transform their creative processes into resilient pathways that sustain artistic integrity amidst evolving environmental constraints.

The research process commenced with an empirical survey titled Quality of Life Under the COVID-19 pandemic context, assessing 100 residents in the Salaya sub-district. Findings revealed that 85% of respondents experienced severe disruption in communal participation, while 88% expressed a clear mandate for onsite cultural activities held in open-air environments. These results directly informed the adoption of a Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) framework (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014). Within this model, the project employs a dual-track strategy of active conservation and creative deconstruction: while active conservation focuses on perpetuating the community's musical and performing arts legacies, creative deconstruction is simultaneously utilized to adapt and reimagine these forms in response to contemporary situations and emerging contexts. By centering

community agency, this process facilitates close collaboration through the Collaborative Cultural Action Network (CCAN), bridging the expertise of artists, academic networks, local government administrators, and community representatives.

The primary objective of this research is thus to explore and implement adaptive revitalization strategies for local musical and performing arts in Salaya. By focusing on the post-pandemic transitional era, the study aims to foster cultural resilience through collaborative creativity. This overarching aim is operationalized through the aforementioned CPAR framework, which serves to bridge theoretical insights with communal practice, ensuring the sustainability of Salaya's living cultural expressions amidst contemporary disruptions.

Literature Review

Cultural Adaptation and Resilience in Peri-Urban Contexts: A Socio-Ecological Perspective

The Salaya community offers a compelling lens through which to examine cultural resilience within transitional landscapes. As articulated by McGee (1991), these peri-urban zones exhibit a dynamic interplay of urban and rural characteristics, fostering unique socio-spatial configurations. Salaya's hybridity is evidenced by the shift from subsistence farming toward market-oriented entrepreneurship, a transformation that has fundamentally altered local livelihoods and social relationships (Wannarat, 2017). This socio-economic transition necessitates analytical approaches that transcend traditional urban-rural dichotomies (Brenner and Schmid, 2011), recognizing that cultural expressions are embedded within complex adaptive systems. Drawing on a socio-ecological perspective and systems theory, this research recognizes that cultural expressions are embedded within complex adaptive systems of social and environmental interactions. In this context, cultural resilience, defined as the ability of communities to maintain and adapt their cultural practices in response to socio-economic and environmental changes, and adaptive capacity, the ability to adjust to change, moderate potential damages, and take advantage of opportunities (IPCC, 2014), are conceptualized as emergent properties of these systems. Furthermore, cultural ecosystem services, the contributions of cultural practices to human well-being, are analyzed to understand how Salaya's traditions support community resilience. The study extends beyond the immediate boundaries of Salaya to encompass the broader region, acknowledging the fluidity of cultural spaces and the historical significance of shared living cultural expressions (Chandransu et al., 2023). In this transitional context, the interplay between cultural conservation and cultural deconstruction becomes pivotal, driving a strategic reconfiguration of local expressions to ensure their continued relevance.

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Protection and Community Engagement

Building upon the socio-ecological perspective, this research acknowledges the critical role of ICH protection in fostering cultural resilience. As Schippers notes, "From the middle of the past century, the concept of protecting music as ICH emerged, identifying specific traditions and people that deserved to be supported" (Schippers, 2024). This concept, which inspired UNESCO's 2003 ICH Convention, underscores the importance of recognizing and safeguarding diverse musical expressions. However, it is crucial to address the "Pros and Cons of the 2003 Convention," as highlighted by Schippers. While the convention has successfully raised international awareness and spurred significant investments in ICH, it has also faced criticism for its nation-state-centric approach, which can "take away agency from the people to whom the music means most" (Schippers, 2024). Moreover, the tendency to treat music practices as "objects to preserve rather than as living traditions" (Schippers,

2024) overlooks the complex social, cultural, and economic factors that sustain them. This gap is further addressed by Schippers and Seeger (2022), who emphasize that music sustainability is inherently linked to its responsiveness to social and cultural shifts, requiring practices that remain meaningful within lived realities. This study further aligns with the perspective of Harnish (2005, 1-2), who argues that for cultural festivals to remain meaningful, they must "adjust to contemporary realities." In his analysis of the Lingsar Festival, Harnish demonstrates that what officials or outsiders might perceive as a loss of tradition is often viewed by the community as *perkembangan* (development) or *perbaikan* (improvement) – strategic shifts that allow a festival to maintain its core identity while navigating socio-political changes. By applying this lens to Salaya, the current research posits that the "shifting identities" and reconfiguration of local performances during the pandemic are not signs of cultural erosion, but rather evidence of agency and identity formulation (Harnish, 2005, 2) necessary for living cultural expressions to survive in a volatile world.

Collaborative Creativity and Cultural Resilience: A Social Constructionist Lens

This research explores the local music and performing arts legacies of Salaya by examining how social interactions shape and sustain cultural meanings. As Chandransu et al. (2023) observe, music serves as a vital medium that reflects the complex identity and diversity of a community. Central to this study is the process of collaborative creativity, which fosters an open environment where the perspectives of artists, academics, and local practitioners converge. This collaborative framework aligns with the concept of festival liminality, suggesting that periods of crisis – such as the COVID-19 pandemic – can serve as transformative spaces where social norms are temporarily eased, allowing for a strategic restructuring of cultural systems (Chan, 2023). Therefore, this collective creative process acts as both a remedy for pandemic fatigue and a mechanism that empowers these living cultural expressions to remain resilient and responsive within contemporary social contexts.

Connecting Theory to Practice: Adaptive Revitalization in Salaya

To operationalize the aforementioned conceptual frameworks, this research synthesized the local music and performing arts repository of the Salaya community to implement a unified adaptive revitalization process. This approach focuses on the systematic integration of active conservation and creative deconstruction as follows:

- Active conservation: This includes the repertoire of *phleng lae*, the domestic theatrical practices of the *Theppradanporn* (*lakhon chatri*) and *Saidara Thidathep* (*likay*) troupes, the *Suwannasin* (*trae wong Suwannasin*), and the *phleng ruea* artist networks inheriting the wisdom of national artists from neighboring communities.
- Creative deconstruction: To address contemporary social challenges, the research employs interdisciplinary restructuring for new creative outputs. For instance, the *luk thung* song "Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya" incorporates community keywords and narratives of a happy community, recomposed within the stylistic identity of the genre. Similarly, the *Kanlapaphruek* project integrates contemporary Thai dance, visual arts, and classical music compositions to foster collective emotional healing and communicate a shared symbolism of hope within public spaces.

The synthesis of this literature review demonstrates that the sustainability of local music and performing arts in a peri-urban context like Salaya, amidst a crisis, is not confined to

maintaining static forms. Rather, it necessitates collaborative creativity to strategically re-configure these living cultural expressions, ensuring they remain meaningful and responsive to contemporary social shifts.

Research Methodology

This study employs Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014) to facilitate the adaptive revitalization of local music and performing arts in Salaya. The research aims to implement cultural activities during the transitional period after the peak of the pandemic as the situation began to stabilize. This was achieved by establishing a communicative space (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014, 21) where stakeholders could identify strategies for future resilience. Central to this approach is reaching an intersubjective agreement among a diverse range of participants (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014, 4–5), including artists, academics, local government representatives, and community representatives acting as the Collaborative Cultural Action Network (CCAN). Acting as partners in the co-creation of knowledge, these stakeholders work together to reconfigure community cultural practices, a process framed by the transformation of practice architectures (Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon 2014, 31–34). This participatory ethos ensures that the revitalization process remains strictly responsive to the lived realities of the community throughout the study.

Collaborative Inquiry and Documentation

The data collection was designed as a collaborative inquiry to document the local music and performing arts of Salaya. This involved a participatory documentation strategy, where researchers and the CCAN co-identified significant cultural markers and narratives. Participant observation was conducted during local performances to gain a situated understanding of the community's lived experiences (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011). The study also utilized semi-structured dialogues – conducted as flexible exchanges – to capture oral histories and in-depth perspectives of artists and local practitioners (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015). This approach ensured that the documentation of community music and performance was grounded in intersubjective validation. Given the scarcity of written records, this process was vital in representing the community's collective voice and memory regarding annual festivities, categorized by specific local music and performing arts genres.

Research Procedures: Dual-Level Cycles

The research was operationalized through nested cycles operating at two levels: strategic management and artistic creativity.

Phase 1: Planning and Aesthetic Setting (Plan)

At this stage, the framework served as a platform for stakeholders to decide which local music and performing arts resources would be used to communicate COVID-19 pandemic prevention and provide healing:

- Strategic level: The CCAN designated Wat Suwannaram, a local Buddhist temple, as the operational hub because it is a community center with open-air spaces suitable for cultural activities under safety protocols.
- Artistic level: Researchers and artists conducted local music and performing arts repository mapping to select genres for the project. The group prioritized the traditional repertoire of *phleng lae*, *lakhon chatri*, *likay*, *trae wong*, and *phleng ruea*. These were reimagined as resilient pathways that provided both COVID-19 pandemic education and entertainment.

Phase 2: Action and Negotiated Creativity (Act)

This phase is the core of the creative process where collaborative decision-making guided the content:

- Active conservation via script interjection: For local artists and troupes – including the *phleng lae* of Mae Bamrung Phinitkul, the *phleng ruea* networks, *Theppradanporn* (*lakhon chatri*), *Saidara Thidathep* (*likay*), and the *Suwannasin* (*trae wong Suwannasin*) – the process led to script interjection. Artists and researchers co-designed performances where artists and local practitioners integrated health protocols, such as mask-wearing and sanitizer use, into comedic improvisations. This preserved the core of the entertainment while adapting the script to contemporary situations.
- Creative deconstruction via creative recomposition:
 1. Co-creation of “Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya.” The production of this *luk thung* song extracted local cultural codes through a community keywords bank. Residents co-authored lyrics reflecting their identity, and the music video involved multi-sectoral participation – from farmers to government officials – as co-performers, reinforcing the community's representational agency.
 2. Interdisciplinary symbolism in the “Kanlapaphruek” project: This initiative integrated the Bangkok Metropolitan Orchestra (BMO), a trumpet soloist, and contemporary dancers to achieve a symbolic consensus. The process allowed artists and academics to negotiate the interpretation of the *Kanlapaphruek* (Wishing Tree) into a structured choreography symbolizing hope and resilience.

Phase 3: Participatory Observation and Field Documentation (Observe)

This phase focused on the systematic monitoring of the implemented cultural activities. Researchers and the CCAN conducted structured field observations and audiovisual documentation during the live performances at Wat Suwannaram. The observation criteria prioritized tracking community engagement levels, the seamlessness of health protocol integration within the modified scripts, and audience emotional responses. Gathering this empirical data was crucial to providing a verified baseline of field realities for subsequent analytical evaluation.

Phase 4: Collaborative Reflection and Lesson-Learned Reflection (Reflect)

The final phase used a structured reflection process to ensure the sustainability of the interventions:

- Intersubjective validation: Representatives from the government, clergy, artists, and the community analyzed whether the local music and performing arts outputs effectively revitalized Salaya's identity.
- Policy integration and sustainability: This reflection resulted in a consensus to transition to a sustainable model. Proposals were made to local administrative organizations to integrate these community festivities into annual budgets. Synthesizing these lessons provided a roadmap for proactive revitalization, ensuring these living cultural expressions remain a resilient mechanism for social survival.

Research Findings

Strategic Management

At this level, the research crystallized into an Integrated Collaboration Model, driven by the “Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya” community festivity during the post-pandemic transition. This process underscores the capacity to manage a transition zone – the intersection of urban and peri-urban landscapes – by reconfiguring the roles of existing government and

local agencies. Within this framework, the research team acted as a facilitator, bridging the established mandates of various sectors to co-create a local music and performing arts system that revitalizes the community's social well-being.

Infrastructure and Logistics Management

The coordination of cultural activities amidst public health constraints was a collaborative manifestation between the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) and the Subdistrict Municipality. Together, they developed a support system that encompasses:

- Multilateral traffic and transport management: Strategic access points connecting roads, waterways (Khlong Mahasawat), and railway-adjacent areas were co-managed to ensure a safe and systematic flow to the event sites.
- Sanitation and environmental management: Waste management and cleanliness were handled by local authorities to ensure that the activity space reflected the principle of ecological aesthetics. The findings highlight an aesthetic of safety – where beauty is inherently linked to sanitation. Transforming the event space (Wat Suwannaram) into a well-ventilated and hygienic environment became a vital part of the aesthetic experience. The audience's sense of safety and trust in public health protocols served as the essential foundation, allowing them to engage deeply with the local music and performing arts. This management ensured that the activity space harmonized with Salaya's actual environment through a shared commitment to the project's goals.
- Communication systems and public address: The process integrated traditional community communication (local public address systems) with digital platforms to broaden public awareness and foster emotional restoration among residents.

Safety and Health Management

As the activities were organized during the post-pandemic transition, public health management became a fundamental factor in the design process:

- Public health and hygiene protocols: Collaborative planning with local health authorities allowed for the establishment of preventive measures tailored for open-air environments. This ensured that activities could proceed without posing risks to the public.
- Public order management: The integration of security personnel helped maintain public safety and minimize external disturbances. This effort preserved an environment conducive to social retreat, providing a safe communal space for residents to reconnect and mitigating the social isolation experienced during previous lockdowns.

Educational and Cultural Asset Management

The research utilized these activities as a platform for community capacity building while respecting the existing mandates of local organizations:

- Educational integration: The project facilitated learning processes in local music and performing arts for local youth, encouraging their participation in contemporary performances and innovative musical works. This approach utilized the arts as a catalyst for inspiration and the development of new skills in the younger generation.
- Fostering a sense of belonging: By employing techniques to brainstorm and identify local cultural assets and history, the “Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya” initiative became a space where the community could exercise collective decision-making and achieve self-representation.

Artistic Creation

This dimension is focused on the actual creation and adaptation of artistic works in Salaya. To align with the CPAR framework, the research process actively engaged with local performers through collaborative creativity. This approach ensured that traditional art forms remained responsive to the lived realities of the community during the post-pandemic recovery, effectively functioning as mechanisms for socio-psychological healing.

Active Conservation: Mobilizing Tradition in Crisis

This section presents the research findings on mobilizing traditional local music and performing arts to address contemporary social challenges. The project targeted specific art forms identified through the community's local music and performing arts repository mapping: *phleng lae*, domestic theatrical practices (*lakhon chatri* and *likay*), *trae wong*, and the *phleng ruea* artist network.

- *Phleng lae*: This performance, titled “Chom Khlong Mahasawat” (Admiring Khlong Mahasawat), was utilized for narrating history and fostering commemoration by highlighting the distinctive features of the waterway and local identity. Facilitated by Apilak Kasempholkoon, the performers, Bamrung and Khanittha Phinitkul, co-developed new lyrics while preserving the authentic traditional *lae* vocal style. This creation functioned as a tool for reviving community pride and encouraging agricultural tourism by guiding the audience through significant local landmarks along the canal.



Figure 1. Performance of *phleng lae* “Chom Khlong Mahasawat” by Bamrung and Khanittha Phinitkul, integrating new local narratives within the traditional vocal style. (Source: Authors, 2022).

- *Phleng ruea*: Working with the Mae Srinuan Kham-at network, this initiative focused on collective emotional healing through an aural repatriation process. Artists, researchers, and local youth co-authored new *phleng ruea* lyrics, transforming traditional lively interactions into a platform for sharing communal emotions. The narrative began with acknowledging the enforced silence of the lockdown before transitioning into a joyful, resilience-building performance, effectively empowering the community to exercise agency in revitalizing the waterfront.



Figure 2. Collaborative performance of *phleng ruea* involving youth and senior artists from the Mae Srinuan Kham-at network, demonstrating the adaptive reconfiguration of the lively genre for emotional healing. (Source: Authors, 2022).

Health Communication through Theatrical Performance (Performing Arts and Script Adaptation):

This group leveraged the inherent flexibility of folk drama to integrate safety information, utilizing the artists' specific skills to interact with the audience:

- *Lakhon chatri*: The Theppradanporn troupe presented the story *Sang Thong: Leap Mueang*, utilizing a script interjection strategy. This process was a direct manifestation of artist agency, where performers selected appropriate moments during the performance to integrate COVID-19 pandemic prevention content. This involved designing *chamaut* (clown) characters to discuss disease prevention while incorporating actual props, such as face masks and hand sanitizer, into the stage performance. This implementation proves the role of artists as co-designers of communication capable of adapting traditional practices to contemporary lived realities.



Figure 3. *Lakhon chatri* performance by the Theppradanporn troupe, demonstrating artist agency and script interjection in “*Sang Thong: Leap Mueang*.” (Source: Authors, 2022).

- *Likay*: The Saidara Thidathep Troupe utilized improvisation – the core skill enabling local arts to adapt. Performers used their wit to modify dialogue and humor every 2 to

3 minutes based on real-time audience reactions. All communication methods were determined solely by the artists, such as spontaneously inventing jokes about social distancing or incorporating popular songs to reduce stress. This process effectively transformed complex medical information into accessible content that resonated with the cultural preferences of the Salaya community.



Figure 4. *Lakhon chatri* performance by the Theppradanporn troupe, demonstrating artist agency and script interjection in “*Sang Thong: Leap Mueang*.” (Source: Authors, 2022).

Building a Positive Atmosphere in Public Spaces

This group utilized music as a strategic tool to manage the communal environment, focusing on alleviating the psychological impact of isolation by creating safe, culturally familiar spaces for social interaction:

- *Trae wong Suwannasin*: The brass band performed popular *ramwong* and *luk thung* songs, blending classics with contemporary favorites familiar to the residents. This performance at Wat Suwannaram, supported by local government sanitation protocols, functioned beyond mere entertainment. It served as a strategic use of music to alleviate the communal isolation experienced during lockdowns, creating a safe space for community interaction and reconnection within a supervised open-air environment.



Figure 5. *Trae wong Suwannasin* performance, utilizing brass band music for social reconnection and emotional well-being at Wat Suwannaram. (Source: Authors, 2022).

Creative Deconstruction: Adaptive Interdisciplinary Adaptation

This level of implementation serves as the “central axis” of the entire research project, functioning as the link between all activities. It focuses on the structural reconfiguration of traditional artistic elements to create innovative art forms that address contemporary social needs. This process is driven by representational agency, where local community members participate as cultural owners through two primary activities:

- *Luk Thung Song "Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya": Communicating identity through community narrative:* This activity utilizes *luk thung* as a tool for communal unity and psychological healing. The key output is not merely a new song, but the creation of a community keywords bank. The research team conducted field interviews to collect the villagers' feelings and stories regarding happiness in Salaya, which were then synthesized into lyrics reflecting local history, cultural assets, and authentic lifestyles. In the music video production, community members – ranging from farmers and vendors to government officials – participated as co-performers, representing their true identities. Furthermore, the song was performed by Seri Rungsawang, a renowned *luk thung* artist with a significant local fan base, transforming the song into a concrete voice of the community that projects pride and collective spirit. Currently, this piece has been adopted as an official community song for various local festivals.



Figure 6. QR code for the “Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya” music video, performed by *luk thung* artist Seri Rungsawang. (Source: Authors, 2026).

Kanlapaphruek project: Art adaptation as the heart of collective healing: The “Kanlapaphruek” project stands as a central axis in this research. It is an interdisciplinary artistic adaptation that required six months of intensive planning and preparation to transition from a traditional performance to a work where the community oversees and selects content at every stage:

- *Conceptual design:* Initiated by artist Wichit Apichatkriengkrai, the project deconstructs the traditional meaning of *Kanlapaphruek* into a symbol of spiritual healing. The artist conducted field research on Thai craftsmanship patterns and religious art forms in Salaya to design a sculptural structure representing strength and flexibility, established as a Wishing Tree in a public space.
- *Community consultation and oversight:* Over six months, the community and the Collaborative Cultural Action Network (CCAN) played a vital role in reviewing and providing feedback:
- *Site selection and participation:* The community collaboratively selected Wat Suwan-naram as the exhibition site to ensure maximum accessibility. They organized the “Write-and-Hang” activity, where the artist designed *Kanlapaphruek* flowers modeled after the form of the COVID-19 virus. Residents were invited to write prayers or express their feelings and hang them on the tree. This process transformed a visual arts piece into a safe space for collective emotional release and healing.

- Interdisciplinary integration: Once the sculpture was installed, it became the stage for a performance weaving multiple disciplines together:
- Music: A collaboration with the Bangkok Metropolitan Orchestra (BMO) and other project artists.
- Contemporary dance and youth engagement: Youth from Wat Salawan School were selected to perform alongside professional artists. The students were given the opportunity to co-design movements reflecting life's adaptation, fostering cultural pride and a sense of value in their living cultural expressions.



Figure 7. Kanlapaphruek performance at Wat Suwannaram: Collective healing and spiritual resilience. (Source: Authors, 2022).



Figure 8. The “Write-and-Hang” activity on the “Kanlapaphruek” flowers, demonstrating community engagement and emotional release on the Wishing Tree during the post-pandemic transition. (Source: Authors, 2022).



Figure 9. QR code for the recorded “Kanlapaphruek” performance, showcasing the interdisciplinary artistic innovation and intersectoral collaboration. (Source: Authors, 2026).

Synthesizing Research Findings into a Project Overview

The research findings in active conservation and creative deconstruction demonstrate a unified connection throughout the project. While the conservation efforts involving *phleng lae*, *phleng ruea*, *lakhon chatrī*, *likay*, and *trae wong* functioned as the foundation for preserving traditions and communicating critical information through community familiarity, the creative projects – specifically the song “*Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya*” and the “*Kanlapaphruek*” activities – served as a bridge. This bridge utilized cultural capital to create interdisciplinary adaptations that reached younger generations and external audiences more extensively. This synergistic workflow indicates that the project's success did not stem from a top-down shepherd role exercised by the researchers. Instead, it emerged from a collaborative ecosystem where all stakeholders – including academics, professional artists, local students, government officials, and various networks – collectively participated in decision-making and project oversight. This process transformed artistic works into living cultural expressions and essential tools for restoring the spiritual well-being of Salaya. However, the heart of this success was not merely the revival of disrupted activities, but the demonstration of local music and performing arts adaptability. This proves that local music and performing arts can dynamically respond to and flow with changing social circumstances. This research serves as a conceptual foundation for artists and the community to view culture as a strategic tool – one that is ready to be deconstructed and reconstructed to remain meaningful.

Discussion

This research demonstrates that revitalizing local music and performing arts in Salaya's peri-urban landscape is more than just keeping old traditions alive; it is a strategic way to heal the community's spirit and build social strength. These findings support the argument by Schippers (2016) that music stays alive only when the community can make it relevant to their current lives. By moving away from a top-down approach where researchers make all the decisions – the shepherd role – and instead acting as facilitators within a critical participatory action research (CPAR) framework, this project filled a major gap in how we handle the social and spiritual pain caused by the pandemic's lockdowns. The results prove that living cultural expressions are not fragile objects that must be frozen in time, but a living, adaptive system that can change to survive social and environmental pressures.

The success of active conservation in this project – involving *phleng ruea*, *lakhon chatrī*, *likay*, and *trae wong* – shows that using what is familiar to the community is an effective tool for communication during a crisis. Traditional models of protecting local music and performing arts often treat music as something to be stored away, but our use of script interjection and aural repatriation allowed the performers to use their own artist agency. This aligns with Harnish's (2005) observation that when a community changes a performance to fit the times, they do not see it as losing their tradition, but as necessary development. Specifically, the *trae wong* was utilized as a strategic tool to manage the communal environment and atmosphere, helping to alleviate social isolation. By weaving public health messages into the improvisation of these entertaining shows, we demonstrated that folk arts possess a natural fluidity that allows them to speak to the reality of the pandemic while keeping their original spirit intact.

Furthermore, the peri-urban nature of Salaya presented a unique administrative challenge due to its overlapping jurisdictions and diverse social structures. As a transition zone be-

tween urban expansion and rural traditions, implementing cultural activities required navigating complex power dynamics among local government bodies, such as the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) and the Subdistrict Municipality. Managing these multi-sectoral collaborations was not merely a matter of logistics, but a process of reconciling different institutional mandates with the lived needs of the community. The primary challenge lay in working with people from varied backgrounds – ranging from traditional folk artists to local authorities – who often held differing perspectives. By acting as facilitators, the research team created a 'communicative space' where these diverse stakeholders could reach an intersubjective agreement. This proves that in peri-urban contexts, cultural resilience is built through the successful negotiation of social and administrative boundaries.

The creative deconstruction track, seen in the song “Yu Yen Pen Suk Na Salaya” and the “Kanlapaphruek” project, further proves the power of representational agency. Instead of just following basic participation rules, we used Chan’s (2023) idea of festival liminality, which views a crisis as a rare space where old social norms can be broken and rebuilt. The creation of a community keywords bank – where the residents themselves chose the words for the lyrics – ensured that the community’s voice was the foundation of the work, not just an afterthought. This approach directly challenges the usual government-led ways of managing local music and performing arts by giving the power back to the local community, making community members the true owners of their culture.

Finally, the focus on managing the event at Wat Suwannaram shows a deep connection between ecological aesthetics and the aesthetic of safety. We found that in a post-pandemic world, you cannot fix a community’s spiritual well-being unless you also show a clear commitment to safety and health protocols in the space where people gather. This management turned the temple into a safe communal space, proving that cultural ecosystem services can be used as a tool to bring people back together after long isolation. In summary, this research offers a practical roadmap for others, showing that for culture to survive in an unpredictable world, we must be willing to intentionally and collaboratively transform living cultural expressions so they serve the real, daily lives of the people.

Recommendations

1. Transform the research project into a locally-owned Salaya Model: While this research successfully demonstrated collaborative creativity, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations as a time-bound project. To ensure continuity, the initiative should transition into a “Salaya Model” that is locally owned, moving beyond a reliance on national policy. Empowering the Core Working Group (CWG) to independently manage cultural assets ensures that the community retains the tools to sustain their living cultural expressions and respond to future crises through established local networks.
2. Scale cultural resilience strategies to other peri-urban landscapes: The lessons learned from Salaya provide a practical roadmap for other peri-urban areas facing similar developmental pressures. Future initiatives in different locations should prioritize understanding local power dynamics rather than waiting for national solutions that may not fit the context. By fostering intersubjective agreements at the local level, other communities can adapt conservation and deconstruction strategies to their specific local music and performing arts repositories effectively.
3. Empower local authorities to lead cultural policy independent of national mandates:

Local authorities, such as the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO), should enhance their capacity to view the arts as essential cultural ecosystem services. This study suggests that local governments do not need to wait for national directives to prioritize community well-being. By integrating “aesthetic of safety” standards into local ordinances, subdistricts can take immediate action to protect their social fabric, proving that the arts are a strategic tool driven by local mandates and community-funded initiatives.

Note

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