



พื้นที่ศักดิ์สิทธิ์ การบนบานศาลกล่าว กับการพัฒนาเมือง
โดยใช้ความเชื่อเป็นฐาน

Sacred spaces, votive offerings, and urban development
based on belief systems

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Received: August 20, 2025

Revised: December 1, 2025

Accepted: December 2, 2025

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งพัฒนาตัวแบบการพัฒนาเมืองอัจฉริยะโดยใช้ความเชื่อเป็นฐาน โดยใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ เก็บข้อมูลด้วยการสังเกตแบบมีส่วนร่วมและแบบสำรวจวัตถุวัฒนธรรมจากพื้นที่ศักดิ์สิทธิ์แปดแห่งในเขตเมืองพิษณุโลก วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ทฤษฎีฐานราก ผลการศึกษาพบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างนโยบาย กลยุทธ์การพัฒนาพื้นที่เขตเมือง ความเชื่อเรื่องโชคแบบชั่วคราวและองค์ประกอบของพื้นที่ศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ผลการศึกษพบรูปแบบการพัฒนาเมืองอัจฉริยะทางปัญญาตามกรอบเสาหลักนโยบายสี่ประการ ซึ่งมีเป้าหมายสำคัญเพื่อใช้มิติทางวัฒนธรรมและความเชื่อในการพัฒนาพลเมืองอัจฉริยะและขับเคลื่อนการพัฒนาเมืองอย่างรอบด้านและยั่งยืน ประกอบด้วย 1) การปรับทิศทางแนวคิดด้านวิบุรุษนิยมและการกำหนดคุณค่า 2) การเสริมสร้างทุนมนุษย์และความเชื่อมั่นในตนเอง 3) การเปลี่ยนผ่านทางดิจิทัลวัฒนธรรมและการไหลเวียนของความรู้ และ 4) การจัดการทรัพยากรวัฒนธรรมอย่างยั่งยืน โดยมีข้อเสนอเชิงนโยบายที่สำคัญคือ การกำหนดกลยุทธ์การพัฒนาเมืองที่ให้ความสำคัญมากขึ้นกับวิบุรุษในชีวิตประจำวัน เพื่อยกระดับจิตใจของบุคคลด้านการกำหนดคุณค่า สะท้อนย้อนคิดถึงการตายของตนเอง สร้างแรงบันดาลใจในการกระทำสิ่งดีงามที่เกินความคาดหมายปกติ สร้างเสริมทัศนคติที่ดีและเชื่อมั่นในอำนาจการควบคุมของตนเอง และพัฒนาระบบเทคโนโลยีเพื่อเสริมสร้างทักษะแห่งอนาคตที่จำเป็นต่อการพัฒนาเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ตลอดชีวิต

คำสำคัญ: เมืองอัจฉริยะที่มีปัญญา พื้นที่ศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ความเชื่อเรื่องโชค

Abstract

This article aims to develop a belief-based intelligent urban development model using qualitative research. Data was collected through participant observation and a survey of cultural objects from eight

sacred sites in the Phitsanulok urban area, with analysis employing grounded theory. The study found a relationship between urban development policies and strategies, the belief in fleeting luck, and the elements of sacred spaces. The results established a framework for Intelligent Smart City development based on four policy pillars, with the key objective of utilizing cultural dimensions and beliefs to develop smart citizens and drive comprehensive, sustainable urban growth. These pillars include: 1) Heroism Re-Orientation and Value Definition, 2) Human Capital and Self-Efficacy Enhancement, 3) Cultural Digitalization and Knowledge Flows, and 4) Sustainable Cultural Resource Management. A critical policy recommendation is to define development strategies that place greater emphasis on Everyday Heroes to elevate personal value definition, encourage mortality reflection, inspire altruistic acts beyond normal expectations, foster a positive self-attitude and belief in self-control, and develop technology systems to enhance the future skills needed to create a lifelong learning city.

Keywords: intelligent smart city, sacred space, belief in luck

Introduction

Human society comprises people of diverse ethnicities, beliefs, religions, and multicultural backgrounds. Although scientific knowledge has advanced significantly in the 21st century and many societies do not formally accept beliefs in luck and the practice of making ritualistic vows, these beliefs and ceremonies remain widely observed (Clendaniel, 2000; Harris, Milfont, & Hornsey, 2022; Vyse, 1997).

Numerous studies have found a connection between belief in luck and socio-cultural factors, such as anxiety (Burger & Lynn, 2005; Chelwani, Agarwal, & Khan, 2023; Chen & Young, 2018; Shrivastav & Kotnala, 2015). Additionally, the connection between belief in luck and environmental uncertainty has been noted (Hamerman & Johar, 2013). Other identified factors include stress and the need for control (Keinan, 2002), as well as the belief that all things possess inherent power and specific characteristics like those of humans (Sierra, Hyman, Lee & Suh, 2015).

Belief in luck is classified into good luck and bad luck, which includes both fleeting luck (that passes as quickly as it arrives) and stable luck. Ohtsuka and Duong (1999) proposed that individuals who prioritize external factors and wish to control their feelings of uncertainty often opt to make ritualistic vows to sacred objects or entities to ward off or dispel bad luck, hoping for temporary good fortune. Meanwhile, individuals who prioritize internal factors possess a positive self-attitude and believe in their own control (Agency Belief), typically choose methods to establish and maintain a positive self-image to achieve stable results (Kay, Whitson, Gaucher, & Galinsky, 2009; Maltby, Day, Gill, Colley, & Wood, 2008).

However, in some contexts, the belief in fleeting luck and the practice of making ritualistic vows also contribute significantly to enhancing and developing the potential of certain groups, specifically in self-efficacy, increased work performance (Zhang, Risen, & Hosey, 2014), and improved chances of survival when facing a crisis (Foster & Kokko, 2009).

These findings have sparked academic debate and social science research on the relationship between belief and the design of development policies. For instance, Whitson & Galinsky (2008) suggested that cultural differences between Western and Eastern societies might correlate with the persistence of the belief in fleeting luck and the behavior of making ritualistic vows in Eastern societies. Furthermore, the relationship between beliefs, ritualistic vows, and an individual's daily life reflects the cultural standards that people in society adhere to, share, and pass down. Simamora & Shi (2022) found that the offerings used in the *Sangjit* ceremony (a Chinese engagement ceremony in Indonesia) aim to maintain the balance of life and spirit when people confront feelings of insecurity and despair and are subtly utilized to convey deep meaning and instill an awareness of the importance of cultural values and the role of the family. Safitri, Kartolo and Sutikno (2024) discovered that the procession and offerings in the *Ruwatan* tradition in Permatang Tatal Village, Serdang Bedagai Regency, Indonesia, held for single women before their wedding, are rooted in faith in supernatural power, religious belief, and the family members' desire to ward off evil from the woman's life. The study by Álvarez-Martí-Aguilar (2023) also found the use of Phoenician Bronze Figurines to express gratitude to the deities following a major disaster at sea.

The fact that the practice of making ritualistic vows is not restricted by class, caste, ethnicity, religion, or culture, nor constrained by boundaries of time or place, means that everyone can access and utilize it to fulfill their desires according to their available resources. This practice serves to create hope, encouragement, and a vision for a better life.

In the case of Thailand, a study by Suwanklang, Phaosavasdi and Penpinan, (2021) found a relationship between belief in luck and faith in deities such as *Phra Phrom* (Brahma), *Phra Wisanu* (Vishnu), and *Phra Siwa* (Shiva), as well as faith in the Hindu principle of karma and the concept of reincarnation. Furthermore, "Votive Offerings" (*Khong Kaebon*) are used as a cultural instrument by both individuals and the state to weave thoughts, hopes, and beliefs into ritual actions.

Votive Offerings encompass objects or acts that individuals, communities, or the state procure or create anew to present in return to spirits, deities, or sacred entities revered by that society. These offerings carry symbolic meaning, reflecting the inherent lowliness of humanity when facing uncertainty, disaster, or various crises. Phumorn (2019) and Chakamanont, Tubporn and Ruengrong, (2022) suggested that everyday foods like Thai *Nam Prik*, Lao *Jaew Bong*, and Cambodian *Tik Kreoung* are all examples of cultural tools that reflect the shared identity of people in Southeast Asia. These items are accumulated from collective memory and utilized as Votive Offerings in ritualistic vows at sacred sites, becoming a common fixture in the daily lives of people residing in both urban and rural areas. In Thai society, popular Votive Offerings found in ritual processes include statues of various animals such as zebras, elephants, tigers, and chickens, as well as performances like traditional dancing and chanting (Chaisiwamongkhol, Wannalee, & Ruengrong, 2022; Chalungka, & Saengthong, 2022; Sakulsueb, Boonsamang, & Eudkwae, 2020).

Numerous case studies reflect the relationship between belief in luck, ritualistic vows, and everyday practices. For example, the work of Udom Auampanee et al. (2022) found a correlation between belief in luck, Buddhist faith, and the transmission of narratives related to miraculous experiences. Champawan (2024) discovered an integration of ghost beliefs and *Lanna* cultural spiritual revitalization rituals with contemporary healing methods, proving highly effective in treating psychiatric patients. Chokariyapithak, Kaewsawan and Thanasribunyapak, (2022) found that ritualistic vows contribute to the growth of the faith economy, which plays a significant role in area development.

The above finding aligns with Jackson's (2022) revelation of the growth of the amulet business within Thailand's cults of wealth. Simultaneously, Promwiset (2019) confirmed the relationship between belief, narrative, and the sacred power of spirits in the tourism industry, as well as the application of marketing strategies in the amulet business. This is further supported by the work of Suebsantiwongse (2024) and Jong (2024), who discuss the substantial income received by local communities and stakeholders from the belief business. These findings are supported by Phumorn (2019), who identified that numerous community businesses are related to superstitions and ritualistic vows. These businesses include the votive animal statue industry, hiring traditional dancing troupes to fulfill vows, rental shops for dance costumes, food and offering vendors, flower gardens, tourism activities at sacred sites, and investments made for traveling to perform these rituals.

Currently, despite Thailand's extensive use of beliefs and sacred sites to drive historical tourism policies and stimulate the economy through related activities, there are noted limitations in developing cities sustainably based on belief and the utilization of sacred spaces. Reeve (2013) suggests that sacred spaces are "living cultural resources" that function in both religious and civic dimensions (Civic Spaces). Consequently, integrating sacred spaces with contemporary urban development is crucial for establishing the city's identity and maintaining its cultural continuity, as these spaces are central to the social and spiritual meaning of urban inhabitants. The primary challenge in belief-based urban development and the use of sacred spaces, therefore, arises from the lack of appropriate cultural management policies. This deficiency allows development strategies to threaten sacred spaces, undermining the values, identity, and spirit of the city's residents.

Nas (2011) supports the view that a city is not merely a physical space but is filled with cultural objects carrying symbolic meaning created by humans. Therefore, the analysis of urbanity should be approached through the lens of symbolism and cultural interpretation to understand the collective memory of the city's inhabitants, as this reflects power relations, beliefs, and the network of relationships between people and space in the social and spiritual dimension.

Numerous cultural objects and symbols found in the city are often linked to politics, national identity, and the negotiations of diverse groups. In Nas's (2011) view, the construction of monuments, the naming of streets, and the organization of celebratory festivals are all tools used by the state

or powerful groups within the city to legitimize themselves and their factions. Simultaneously, sacred spaces within the city also reveal conflicts, resistance, or negotiations among the residents.

Chao (2024) suggests a case study of the urban revitalization project in the central business district of *Dar es Salaam*, Tanzania, which involved the eviction of Muslim and Indo-African communities that had historically played a significant role in the city's social history. This resulted in residents losing spaces for religious practice, community markets, and public areas, consequently allowing urban development policies to threaten the cultural heritage and way of life of the original community members.

Furthermore, urban development focused on creating a "modern city image" divorced from its cultural roots results in the city losing its unique identity and sense of ownership. Farhan and Malik (2025) used spatiotemporal analysis with satellite imagery and geospatial technology data spanning over thirty years (1990–2024) to reveal the impacts resulting from Urban Expansion, which lacked rigorous enforcement of city planning and cultural heritage protection laws. This led to the encroachment and destruction of archaeological sites in Taxila, Pakistan—a UNESCO World Heritage Site significant for its history, Buddhism, and archaeology. Consequently, the buffer zones gradually disappeared and were replaced by residential, commercial buildings, and activities.

In the case of Thailand, political symbolic strategies have been observed, employed by conservative power networks to construct a "national memory" and alter the perception of history, differing from the

original version. This involves the disappearance, alteration, or construction to replace significant cultural objects in the city, such as the plaque and monument of the People's Party (Khana Ratsadon) (Aereerat, 2017; Thai PBS News, 2017).

The results of the systematic literature review above confirm the significance of sacred spaces for area development, both in terms of the economic value generated through historical and cultural tourism development strategies, which have been a key mechanism for Phitsanulok's urban development, both historically and for the future, as outlined in the Phitsanulok Provincial Development Plan B.E. 2566–2570 (2023–2027). The plan's key goals are to enhance economic value through income distribution and community economic development, foster psychological values of peace and hope, and develop public spaces suitable as lifelong learning centers that reinforce acceptance of differences in religion, belief, and culture. Furthermore, sharing experiences and memories through narratives and rituals significantly contributes to fostering understanding and reinforcing the identity of a "City of Faith," which is the foundation for development that balances economic value with intrinsic values. The presence of sacred spaces in the city, in this sense, is therefore a crucial social mechanism for integrating people's way of life with area development policies, aligning with the social context, the needs of the people, and sustainable urban development goals.

However, the central research question of this study remains: What development policy, which prioritizes sacred spaces in the Phitsanulok urban area, is appropriate for advancing towards an Intelligent Smart City? This specific research gap has not yet been addressed in the literature.

Research Objective

To develop a belief-based model for an Intelligent Smart City

Theoretical Framework

This research aims to explore the formation of the Heroism or Hero-Worship cult through historical evidence, narratives from Phitsanulok Province, and urban development policies in Phitsanulok. These policies aim to honor, exalt, and uphold heroic kings and heroes who embody virtue, courage, and influence over beliefs, particularly those who overcome great obstacles to serve as societal models.

The concept of heroism was first systematically reviewed and refers to the admiration and faith directed toward individuals based on their moral influence, courage, and sacrifice to bring about change. Allison and Goethals (2016a, b) propose four types of heroes. First, the transforming heroes refer to those who create change at the level of social structure or values, emphasizing ideology, morality, and justice. Second, the transposing heroes refer to those who create innovation to shift the values or ideas within society. Third, the transcending heroes refer to those who overcome great obstacles. Lastly, the transferring heroes refer to those who transfer values and enhance the abilities of others. In the view of Franco et al. (2011), heroes come in many types, including everyday heroes, social/political heroes, moral heroes, and emergency responders. A hero can be an ordinary person who is not necessarily great but possesses moral courage, sacrifices for society, and willingly learns and challenges social norms to create a better society.

Second, the intelligent cities concept emphasizes developing smart citizens with future skills and fostering a lifelong learning society. In Komninios's (2013) view, a smart city prioritizes human capital, focusing on developing people to be creative, capable of innovation, and possessing high-level skills to drive intellectual capital and knowledge networks. This is not limited to formal educational institutions but encompasses learning resources throughout the city, utilizing knowledge flows mediated by a systematic and efficient digital infrastructure.

This involves using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to manage the city and provide accurate, up-to-date, and publicly accessible information. Furthermore, it utilizes virtual platforms that enable citizens to participate in learning, critique, provide suggestions, and jointly develop the city. This approach continuously enhances the city's capacity for learning, adaptation, and innovation at all levels.

In the case of Phitsanulok, policy components align with the characteristics of development toward becoming an intelligent smart city, utilizing history, culture, and local wisdom. Furthermore, ICT is used to manage sacred spaces for communicating values and disseminating information via digital platforms, encouraging citizen participation in urban development and strategy implementation. This includes learning resources that link urban development with historical, cultural, religious, artistic, and local wisdom dimensions. Extensive evidence of sacred space development is found in the urban area, linking the heroism concept with historical development and the biography of heroic kings, particularly King Naresuan the Great.

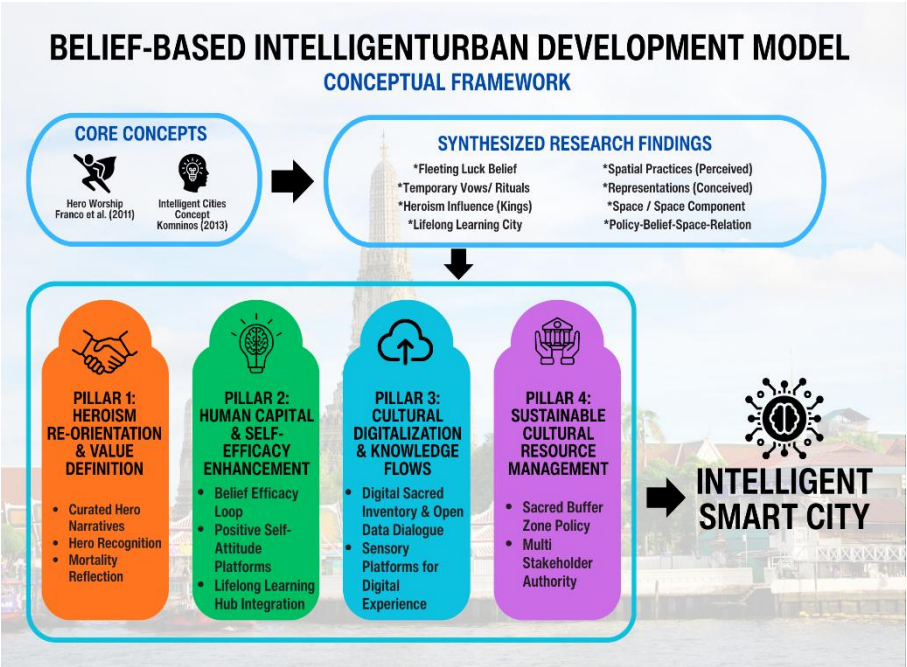


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of belief-based Intelligent Urban Development

Research Methodology

This study utilized the grounded theory framework combined with interpretive techniques to synthesize data from documents collected through a systematic literature review from online databases published between B.E. 2015–2025. The data sources also included local documents such as legends, narratives, and personal records. For the qualitative research component, data collection utilized observation guidelines, cultural object surveys, and narratives. The inclusion criteria for sacred

spaces were frequently mentioned in local documents, recommendations from community leaders, popularity on digital platforms, location within the Phitsanulok urban area, and evidence of relevance to urban development policies. The study included six shrines or monuments dedicated to *King Naresuan* the Great and two other sacred sites, the *King Taksin* the Great Shrine and the Shrine of *Pho Pu Rueangrit*.

Data collection was conducted during public holidays from approximately 7:00 AM until 12:00 PM. This timing was chosen based on the local belief that it is an auspicious time, and this period typically sees a higher number of visitors to the sacred sites than other times. The selection criteria utilized a simple selection method within each stratum to ensure the sample was distributed across all sacred sites. Key characteristics were defined: gender, age, and ritualistic practice style. A simple random sample was then taken from each stratum, resulting in a total sample size of 106 individuals. Data was collected using an observational guide on every third visitor performing rituals at the sacred sites. A six-point observation framework was used: acts, activities, meanings, relationships, participation, and settings. Content analysis involved converting raw data into text, filtering out irrelevant content, and categorizing components, meanings, and the significance of the data aligned with the research objectives. Encoding and recording processes were defined based on the principle of reliability. Data validity was checked by cross-referencing sources before drawing research conclusions and formulating recommendations. All research steps strictly adhered to the principles of human research ethics: Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice.

Synthesized Research Results

The synthetic research results revealed a slight majority of female participants. Most were in the working age group, approximately 30 years and above. The most common form of ritual practice was individual, followed by ceremonies organized by government agencies, local administrative organizations, temples, or educational institutions. Other participants included tourists, study tour groups, and attendees of celebratory events.

The ritual practices observed in the all sacred spaces share six similar key components including 1) separation from the profane to physically separate the sacred space from other areas and symbolically to prepare the user for a new status (e.g., dress codes, shoe removal areas, and conditions for entry); 2) the use of cultural objects to convey symbolic meaning (e.g., architecture, paintings, and colors); 3) presence of the divine or sacred such as statues of heroic kings or heroes, and designated areas connect the ritual practitioners to these sacred entities (e.g., candlesticks, incense burners, offering trays, and mantra plaques); 4) practicing ritual and ceremony; 5) narratives or mythological significance related to bravery, sacrifice, supernatural power, and sacredness; and 6) aesthetic or sensory elements to communicate with the sacred space users.

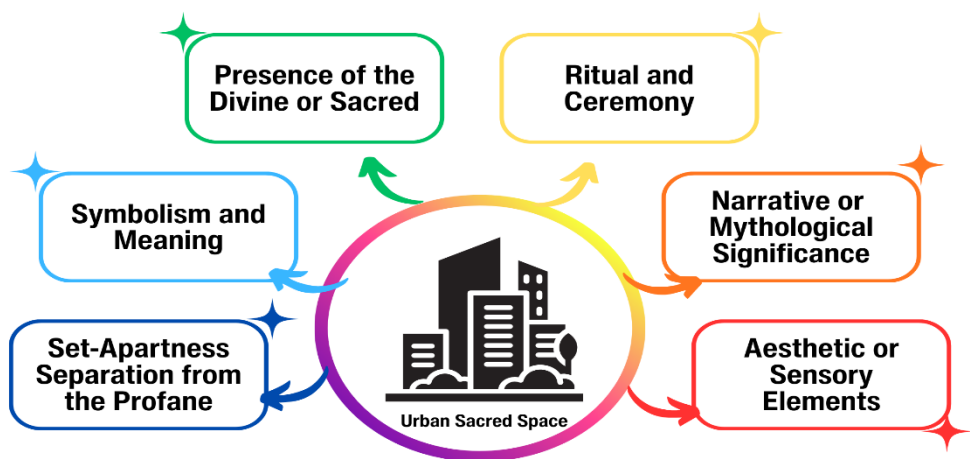


Figure 2. Elements of Rituals in Urban Sacred Spaces in Phitsanulok

The ritual practices of individuals are characterized by flexibility, informality, simplicity, and economy. The primary goal is to fulfill a promise previously made to the enshrined entity in the sacred space, often performed after the request has been granted. This practice varies according to the individual's perception, which is shaped by narratives or legends transmitted both orally and through digital media. Students often clean the area in front of the royal monument, pupils offer hand-held garlands, and the public makes merit or donations. As stated by one person fulfilling a vow at *King Naresuan* the Great Royal Monument at Naresuan University:

“I made a vow two or three years ago, asking to graduate and get a good job. But after I got the job, I didn't have time to return. Only today did I have the chance to offer garlands, two pairs of chicken statues, and one baht coin to apologize and withdraw the vow I made. I did this with the money I had available...”

For rituals performed by groups or organizations, held by government agencies, religious institutions, local administrative organizations, or educational institutions, participants can be classified into two groups. The first group is mandated participants, referring to those who are conscripted, ordered, assigned, or required by role and duty to attend the ceremony; their participation is commonly driven by authority and power. The second group is voluntary participants, referring to participants attending as devotees, observers, and spectators of the state spectacle. These institutional rituals are typically held on important, predetermined days related to the heroic king or hero in that sacred space and are also attended by those visiting for reasons such as historical tourism or spectating the state ceremony.

The ritual practices organized by government agencies place significantly greater emphasis on sacred sites with statues or monuments of heroic kings as the main entity, rather than sites with other types of entities. The presiding officer leading the offering of sacrifices in institutional rituals is often a significant figure or the head of the organizing agency. The transmission of narratives and legends concerning the heroic king's bravery and the sacred site's miracles is continuous, appearing in

policies, printed documents, and online media. Written codes of dress and methods for using the sacred space are implemented. The sacred spaces are decorated with symbols of belief, such as flags, sacred threads (*Sai Sin*), tiered pedestals with flower arrangements (*phan phum*), and large sets of sacrificial offerings. Local dramatic performances or traditional dances are presented, and Buddhist rituals are integrated with Brahman-Hindu chants as found in the Vedas. The performance of these rituals follows clear protocols and maintains continuity in terms of ceremony, schedule, and annual timing.

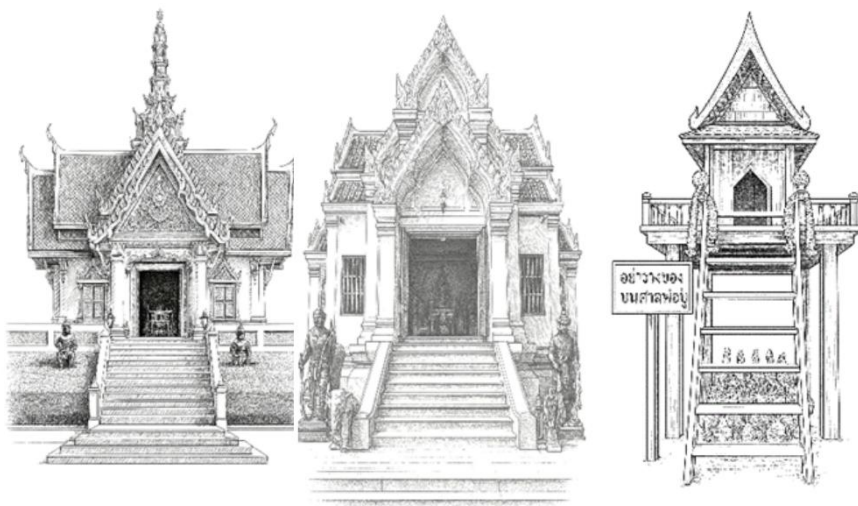


Figure 3. Sacred Sites in Urban Areas, Phitsanulok, Thailand

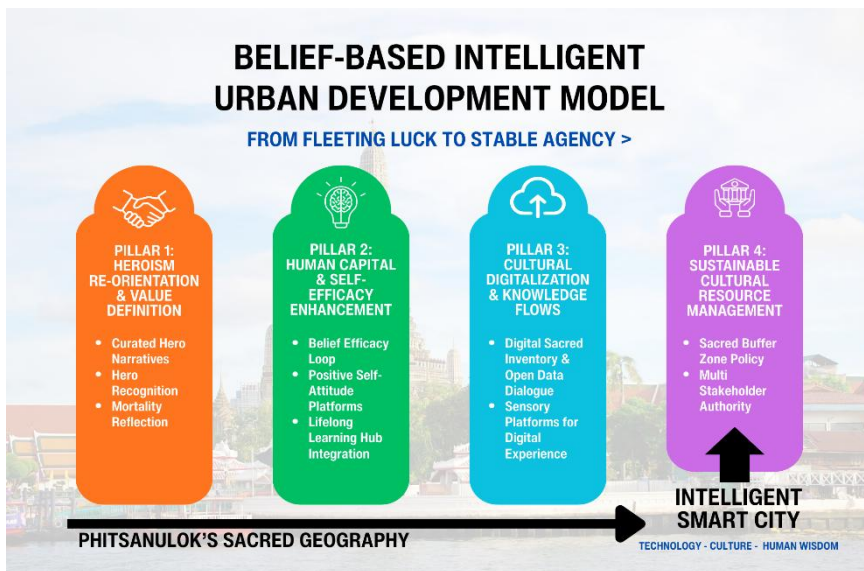
The study results found that the belief in fleeting luck and the heroism concept significantly influence the existence of sacred spaces. Ritualistic practices by individuals, government agencies, and social institutions are driven by Phitsanulok's urban development policies, specifically: city landscape improvement policies, historical tourism policies, and celebratory activities aimed at stimulating the economy under the framework of heroic kingship. These activities include the ceremonial worship of the spirit of *King Naresuan the Great*, competitions for the Yellow-Tailed Chicken (*Kai Lueang Hang Khao*) breed, also known as the "*King Naresuan Chicken*," contests for crafting tiered pedestals (*phan phum*) for royal tribute, and a sound and light show honoring *King Naresuan*.

Three major challenges were identified regarding the urban development policy utilizing belief and sacred spaces. Firstly, the complaints regarding the negative impact on the quality of life and daily routines of Phitsanulok urban residents resulting from celebratory projects held at sacred sites. Specific issues cited include noise pollution, traffic congestion, garbage, and the sale of expensive caravan goods that are not linked to the development of local community products (Manager Online, 2024). Secondly, criticism regarding the governance of the relevant local administrative organizations concerning the large budget spent on designing and constructing numerous Yellow-Tailed Chicken (*Kai Lueang Hang Khao*) symbols and sculptures for landscape development in the Phitsanulok urban area (Manager Online, 2019; Prachatai, 2022). Lastly, inaccessibility to or outdated information disseminated through digital channels due to damaged technology or a lack of maintenance.

Belief-Based Intelligent Smart City Development Model: 4Policy

Pillars

The proposed model aims to bridge the spiritual and cultural capital inherent in sacred spaces with the technological and human-centric goals of an intelligent city. This Belief-Based Intelligent Urban Development Model utilizes the empirical findings from Phitsanulok to shift policy focus from mere ritualistic spectacle to the sustained cultivation of "Smart Citizen" and "Everyday Heroism." The core concept has shifted from fleeting luck to a stable agency that is based on the finding that while fleeting luck is linked to external factors (vows, ceremonies), individuals who exhibit agency belief (positive self-attitude and belief in self-control) achieve more stable results (Maltby, Day, Gill, Colley, & Wood, 2008). The current policy focuses on reinforcing transcendent heroes (heroic kings) through grand, formal rituals, which align with authority and power. The proposed model suggests leveraging the narrative and aesthetic elements of sacred spaces to foster internal agency and the values associated with the everyday hero (moral courage, sacrifice for society, challenging norms).



*Figure 3: The Proposed Model for Intelligent City Development
(4 Policy Pillars)*

Figure 3 displays the Proposed Model for Belief-Based Intelligent Smart City Development (4 Policy Pillars). The Model is structured around four interconnected policy pillars that integrate the Heroism Concept and the Intelligent Smart Cities Concept within the context of Phitsanulok's sacred geography. Pillar 1: Heroism Re-Oriented and Value Definition aims to redefine the city's heroic narrative by balancing the reverence for historical figures (Transcending Heroes) with the celebration of moral actions in daily life (Everyday Heroes). Pillar 2: Human Capital and Self-Efficacy Enhancement ensures the sacred space directly contributes to developing smart citizenship

by reinforcing internal psychological factors essential for future success. Pillar 3: Cultural Digitalization and Knowledge Flows integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to preserve cultural resources, provide open data, and facilitate citizen participation. Pillar 4: Sustainable Cultural Resource Management addresses the need for robust policy to protect the sacred sites as living cultural resources while ensuring they fulfill a civic space's function.

Discussion of Research Results

This research helps explain the social phenomena and power structures found in the eight sacred spaces, including the timing, ritual practice styles, and the complex relationships between individuals, groups, organizations, or social institutions with the sacred spaces and cultural objects. The study results support Henri Lefebvre's (1901–1991) concept of social space, particularly his reference to dialectical materialism to highlight the emergence of alienation, and his critique of structuralism and critical Marxist concepts (Lefebvre, 1991).

The perceived normality of power and the persistence of sacred spaces thus play a crucial role in the human geography of the urban community. The study revealed an essential component in terms of the network of relationships constituting the power of space and place, which influences the way of life of the inhabitants and the design of urbanization policies. This is particularly evident in the occupation of the sites as a form of symbolic power arrangement, as the sacred spaces are superimposed onto the physical territory through complex systems of relationship, both between human and human, and human and non-human.

The supernatural power of the enshrined representations, which are abstract yet dynamic, changing with people's thoughts and hopes, operates in a context transcending typical social and temporal boundaries. The study confirms the relationship between the existence of sacred spaces and the area development policies of agencies and social institutions, which are linked to the persistence of fleeting luck beliefs and ritual practices that impact urban residents' perceptions of life and overall balance.

The persistence of the eight sacred spaces reflects a “Social Product” driven by urban development policies based on the belief in fleeting luck. Although these sacred sites serve as alternative spaces accessible to everyone for psychological solace, building hope, and expressing a symbolic relationship with the representation of power they believe in and have faith in, they do not resolve the underlying causes of various problems.

The triadic superposition of sacred spaces in the urban area comprises three layers of spaces. These include spatial practice, where physical or public space was used in daily life and perceived through the senses. The representations of space where the perception, interpretation, and imagination were developed from experiences, narratives, and discourse concerning the sacred space and belief. The spaces of representation or lived spaces which result from the fusion of physical reality and thought into meaningful objects, both tangible and abstract. This complex characteristic of sacred spaces makes it difficult for urban development policies lacking knowledge, understanding, and awareness

of this triadic spatial state to achieve the goal of becoming an Intelligent Smart City.

This research supports the concept of belief-based urban development that emphasizes the triadic superposition nature of sacred spaces, aligning with the proposals of Lawlor (1982) and Lane (2002). Although the sacred spaces in Phitsanulok's urban area possess distinct historical identities, beliefs, and urban contexts, this study reveals a powerful connection between fleeting luck belief, ritualistic vows, and the Heroism Concept. This connection creates a new set of powerful relationships between human beings and non-human entities that transcend social status and temporal frameworks.

This finding aligns with Franco, Blau and Zimbardo (2011) work, which discusses the integration of belief systems with the valuation of individuals possessing three key attributes: courage, self-sacrifice, and the ability to perform extraordinary actions beyond normal expectation. Furthermore, it supports Allison and Goethals (2016a, b), who argue that the cult of hero worship is a social and psychological process involving beliefs, values, and practices upheld by individuals or groups, which is crucial for the moral and spiritual elevation of people. The researcher supports Champawan's (2024) argument that hero worship is not merely superstition but a form of fulfilling a higher-level need of sacrificing for the public good. The search for meaning and inspiration is therefore vital for elevating the human spirit and social behavior, instilling hope, courage, and inspiration in individuals to perform virtuous deeds beyond normal expectations and fostering a shared sense of living amidst differences.

Policy Gaps and Heroism Influence

This research reveals diverse unmet needs at the policy level, specifically: problems with debt, unemployment, and poverty, in that order. Simultaneously, it reflects individuals' efforts toward self-reliance when facing a crisis, by requesting assistance from entities believed to possess power, according to the belief in fleeting luck. The study also reveals the influence of using belief and the Heroism Concept as tools to drive economic development and historical tourism policies in the urban area. This influence impacts social organization and the relationship patterns between humans and non-human entities through the cultivation of the idea of the Great Person and the allocation of massive budgets for designing the urban landscape within this framework. Evidence of this is found in the cultural objects utilizing the symbol of the Yellow-Tailed Chicken (*Kai Lueang Hang Khao*), which, according to legend, was "King Naresuan's chicken" that defeated the Burmese Crown Prince's chicken. This symbol is used on road signs, sculptures, lamp posts, bridges, and other constructions named after historically significant figures in Phitsanulok.

The research confirms the importance of Heroic Stories that are continuously transmitted through various forms and channels, becoming a part of everyday normality and contributing to the construction of Heroic Institutions firmly established in the sacred spaces, as demonstrated by the case study in the Phitsanulok urban area. This finding aligns with the proposal of Panyawuttrakun (2015).

Nevertheless, the integration of core principles—such as upholding virtue, courage, the sacrifice of life and personal happiness for the nation, and the belief that the supernatural power of "good spirits" can fulfill the requests of devotees—is crucial for setting social value standards. The researcher agrees with Schindler, Pfattheicher, Reinhard and Greenberg (2019) that the perception of the greatness of heroic kings and heroes is related to the need to defend an individual's worldview under conditions of mortality salience. This serves as a form of action within the perceived space that reflects the values and self-concepts of both individuals and societal leaders. This process helps facilitate Mortality Salience (reflection on one's own death).

However, the excessive emphasis on ritual processes, celebrations, and urban landscape adjustments that neglect governance issues and the development of creative values and standards, as well as the resolution of problems at the structural level, may be an obstacle to Phitsanulok's development into a Belief-Based Intelligent Smart City.

The researcher agrees with the counterargument posed by Allison and Goethals (2016b) that hero worship should prioritize the cultivation of Everyday Heroism, which may involve intellectuals or ordinary citizens. Simultaneously, the study supports the proposals of Maltby, Day, Gill, Colley and Wood (2008) and Kay, Whitson, Gaucher and Galinsky (2009) that elevating the human spirit requires teaching society members to define their own values. This must focus on developing the internal potential of individuals to foster stable beliefs derived from developing a positive self-attitude and belief in self-control (Agency Belief). This must

all be done while considering the four pillars of Belief-Based Intelligent Smart City development to ensure sustainable outcomes.

Research Recommendations

The design of belief-based Intelligent Smart City development policy should recognize the development of stable luck belief alongside the development of sacred spaces in the city. These spaces should function as centers for self-value learning and areas where everyone can access and use them to develop life skills, meaningfully connect themselves with the challenges of the modern world, and strengthen skills for coexistence amidst differences in thought, belief, and culture, while prioritizing the creation of "Everyday Heroes."

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