



# Cultural heritage conservation and management in historic districts by participatory process: A case study of Songkhla Old Town

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## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to study and analyze the phenomena of cultural heritage conservation and management that applies participatory approach in Songkhla Old Town. This article contains qualitative research which has been systematically analyzed from academic papers, field survey, and in-depth interview of stakeholders. The study shows that Songkhla Heritage Trust is capable of working with both local government and private sectors which can subsidize and launch the project in an appropriate time. However, Songkhla Old Town still has the obstacles, including, inadequate legal measures regarding the authenticity of heritage buildings, lack of process to bring new generation collaboration, and lack of leader who is accepted by all groups of people. Besides, the conservation of Songkhla has been implemented based on the concept of “Volunteers from Social Capitals”; therefore, even though everyone is free to participate, it is not sustainable enough. These problems may lead to increased numbers of stakeholders and overlapped projects. This article proposes two main recommendations for Songkhla Old Town and for duplication to other similar conservative areas. The first recommendation is to bring all stakeholders to set the system of cultural heritage management by setting the taskforce from representatives of each group with Songkhla Town Municipality acting as facilitator. The second recommendation is to reckon the main issue by following these three steps to create participatory process including (1) assessment on relationships of 3 levels of social capitals, (2) local norm and beliefs analysis, and (3) cultural capital analysis to link with local norm and belief.

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## Introduction

Cultural heritage represents civilization and local wisdom which are the identity of historical sites. In Thailand, the Fine Arts Department was established as a government organization responsible for conservation and management of historical and archaeological sites, which are protected under the Act on Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, B.E.2504 (1961) as last amended by the Act on Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums (No.2), B.E.2535 (1992), which is the principal law for cultural heritage protection. However, the number of old towns in Thailand have remarkably declined according to research by Associate Professor Yongtanit Pimonsathean, Ph.D., To summarize, there are 140 old towns in Thailand located in 54 provinces, but only 5 communities have conservation plan and activities to conserve their pride and identity (Pimonsathean, 2013).

Songkhla Old Town was located on the Malay Peninsula, which was suitable for commerce as well as being on the maritime route that connected the town to the world's centers of civilization. Songkhla, therefore, became an international port town from Ayutthaya until the early Rattanakosin period. Songkhla is one of the old towns in Thailand where three nationalities and two religions have coexisted for a long time, and it has continued to collaborate and conserve its old town since 2007. The article is a part of the dissertation titled "Cultural Heritage Conservation and Management in Historic Districts by Participatory Process in Thai context: A Case Study of Songkhla Old Town". The study shows that for the past 15 years, Songkhla has 4 main stakeholders including civil society, local people, private sector and academic groups. Each of them plays a role and participates in Songkhla conservation, which has both strengths and weaknesses in the cultural heritage conservation and management. This article, therefore, helps suggest means to support the appropriate conservation mechanisms for Songkhla.

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## Methodology

This study was carried out by qualitative research, reviewing documents, and surveys as the first stage, followed by in-depth interviews with open-ended questions with 17 representatives of stakeholders including Provincial Administrative Organization Representative, Songkhla City Municipality Representative, 2 representatives

from Community, 3 from Civil Society Organization (CSO), 4 representing academic institutes, and 4 representing local entrepreneurs; and 2 representatives from the business sector. Data and information from both methodologies were synergized for the analysis and providing recommendations. Finally, research findings were qualitative analysed and proposed as recommendations.

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## Literature Review

Cultural heritage management should be undertaken by participatory process because the cultural heritage is common property shared by all local people. Songkhla is known as a multi-cultural town of 3 ethnic groups who have harmoniously lived and interacted with one another for generations. This can be recognized as social capital, implying that the community is culturally healthy. Thus, social capital and cultural capital are compatible. Nonetheless, the decision to engage in conservation activities depends on social factors. The literature review was conducted based on four main concepts which are: (1) Cultural capital, (2) Social capital, (3) Social factors affecting participation, and (4) Participation types.

### *Cultural Capital*

'Cultural capital' refers to cultural products, both tangible and intangible. These are classified as "Capital" because culture is involved in production and services providing (Throsby, 2001). Therefore, towns with remarkable cultural identity and tradition must conserve their cultural capital so that the old towns can exist with well-conserved identity and be developed creatively. Cultural capital is a component of social capital which plays a vital role in the development of Thai society since Thailand has a unique and diverse culture which is spread throughout the country. If these cultural capitals are developed and used wisely and efficiently, creation and increase of economic and social values are highly expectable (Munkong, 2017).

### *Social Capital*

'Social capital' is the term which refers to all matters which are encountered in everyday life and social interaction between people and groups leading to the forming of social units. (Buddaduang, 2011, p. 14). The purpose of social capital is to build relationships among both personal and organizational levels (Linn, 2001). Obviously, social capital is related to people's

participation, and as Claridge (2004) said, the more people's participation, the more social capital level increases. Sukitpaneent (2010, pp. 9–11) expanded on Claridge, in that there are three levels of social capital, as follows: (1) Micro Level or individual level, which is individual awareness capacity or cognitive social capital, (2) Meso Level, which is structural social capital that emphasizes creating individual interaction between individuals of diverse characteristics to form a network, group, or other forms of organizations, and (3) Macro Level, which is the networking system embedded within the economic, political, and normative system in macro level, including the inter-networking linkage that forms a national system of social capital. However, social relationships are built through time, that is, the longer the society exists, the stronger the relationship and transfer of knowledge that can be made from generation to generation until the “cultural capital” is established.

### *Social Factors Affecting Participation*

Decision making that leads to participation depends on individual and social factors. If social members have common agreements and collaborate, it will lead to social norm. (Satsanguan, 1985, pp. 364–367). Social norm consists of three categories as follows:

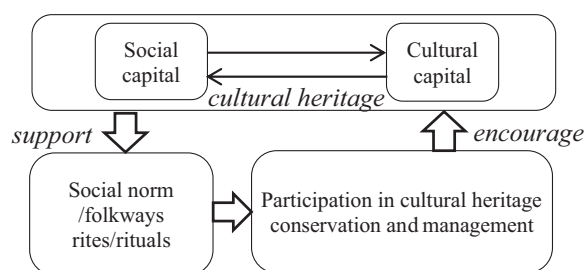
- Folkways or local way of living consisting of guidelines for daily life of local people. In the aspects of participatory process, rites or rituals are good examples to clarify this category, that is, ‘rites’ are informal forms, whereas ‘rituals’ are formal forms.
- Mores is moral and religious beliefs. Norms focus on the right or wrong behaviors in order to protect people's welfare and belongings more than social norms.
- Law is essential for a society with a large number of social members. Laws (such as town planning law or ordinance) issued by governmental organization play important roles to create a peaceful and orderly society.

### *Participation Types*

Participation is voluntary action to associate or take part in activities that each participant commonly acknowledges values and benefits. The approach reduces conflicts and enhances understandings. Through participation, a community will value its social capital and understand its cultural capital, which boost cooperation in conserving capitals and developing solutions to impacts. The study aimed at exploring an appropriate participatory approach for Songkhla old town. The literature review draws a conclusion on 4 types of participation

(The National Council for Voluntary Organization, 2022) which are (1) Volunteer – based on beneficiaries' decision to participate without commitment, (2) About action – Self-motivated participation of beneficiaries with limitation, (3) Collective or Connected – An individual or an institute's decision to participate, based on diverse objectives that may result in achieving same targets, and (4) Purposeful – beneficiaries from all stakeholders to participate in order to support, promote and implement activities for common results.

Figure 1 shows the interrelationship between 4 types of capital concepts and 4 types of participation which enhances the participatory process on cultural heritage conservation and management and could dynamically improve cultural capital and social capital. This interrelationship underscores the phenomena of the last fifteen years of Songkhla's cultural heritage conservation and management with participatory approach and provides recommendations to enhance the conservation in Songkhla Old Town.



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework

### *Methodology*

Songkhla town has a long past that traces history back to 1619, which is the first period of settlement in the Hua Khao Daeng area, and was governed by Muslim leaders. The second period was in Laem Son in 1699, governed by Chinese leaders. In 1835, the town was moved to Bo Yang (the recent Songkhla town centre) and has been developed until today. This article focuses on Songkhla Bo Yang because the area is inhabited harmoniously by 3 ethnicities, namely, Thai, Chinese, and Muslim, who have been sharing their wisdoms to create “Social and Cultural Capital” for more than 180 years. The analysis discusses cultural capital, social capital and social norm of Songkhla and describes conservation and management of the old town with participatory process within the last 15 years. The analysis will later elaborate findings and conclusion.

### Cultural Capital of Songkhla

Cultural capital of Songkhla can be perceived through people's interaction, community living, and cross-cultural marriage, which lead to multicultural concept in Songkhla. For instance, the local community cook chicken for the Muslims on Town Pillar Shrine parade and hold Celebration of Sultan Sulaiman Memorial Day. Tangible cultural capital of Songkhla is the architecture, which is the evidence of the settlement period. Residential design in most of the buildings is influenced by Chinese and Western architecture with some characteristics of the Thai tradition style.

### Social Capital of Songkhla

Social capital of Songkhla has been generated from their living style within the city wall (Figure 3). In the past, a town dweller had tight connection and social cooperation, therefore, the quality of Songkhla's social capital was high especially at the Micro level. This includes local organizations such as Songkhla Forum, Songkhla Heritage Trust and N.A.S., Civil society Organization (Meso), which plays a key role in accessing the local groups, and is subsidized by local governmental organization (Macro). However, the issues of lacking leader's continuity and noncompatible governmental policies on Cultural heritage conservation

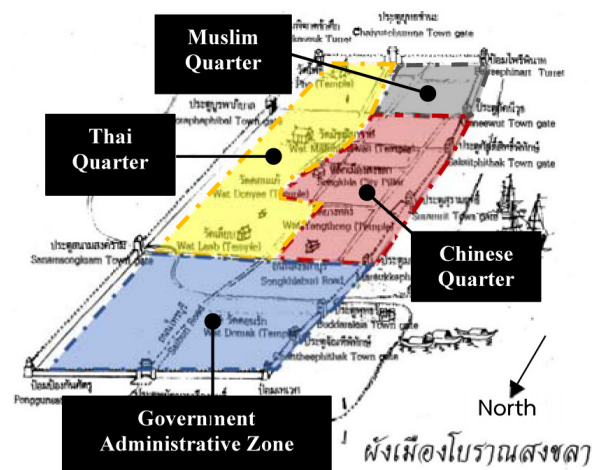
with local needs have led to ineffective conservation methods. This can be recognized as the main challenges to address effective planning and implementation for the benefit of the local people and the increased quality of social capital.

### Social Norms of Songkhla Old Town

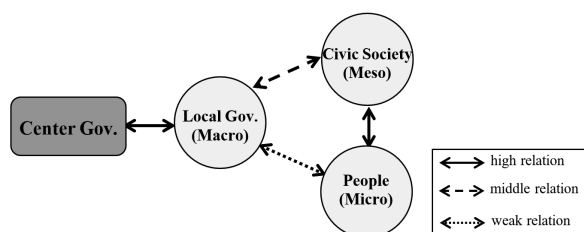
The study of social norms of Songkhla has found that Songkhla has a bonding system based on friendship and cross-religion marriage. During a 20-year stagnation period of Songkhla, cultural consistency declined, resulting in the loss of certain traditions. However, the characteristics of Songkhla people are still strong. (Chuapram, 2003, p. 64). Social structure and hierarchy analysis shows that Songkhla people prefer friendship to authority or legal obligation. However, people still have relationship with town leader, the "Mayor" of Songkhla Municipality (Phetsuwan, personal communication, June 12, 2022). Local people have developed their working and cooperation process in two main means: first, the formal means conducted by governmental process of practice, and the informal means or folkways conducted as part of people's daily life, for instance, the daily discussion or interaction over coffee or tea party called "Ngan liang nam cha", which makes people feel more comfortable in asking for help in expressing their needs and opinions.



**Figure 2** Architect style in Songkhla Old Town  
**Source:** Songkhla Heritage Society (2018, adapted by Author, 2023)



**Figure 3** Settlement in Songkhla Old Town  
**Source:** Hatyaifocus (2017, adapted by Author, 2023)



**Figure 4** The relationship of three levels of social capital in Songkhla Old Town

For the past fifteen years, there has been a trend of old town conservation. Songkhla yet remained stagnant until its cultural heritage had been affected. The incident was the turning point which triggered Songkhla's interest and enthusiasm in cultural heritage conservation, manifested into the scheme of conservation with participatory process since 2007. This makes social capital, cultural capital and social system differ from the past. Changes of social norms in the last fifteen year was described as follows:

### *Three Periods of Participatory Conservation of Songkhla Old Town*

From Songkhla old town's cultural heritage conservation and management with the participatory process reviewed from papers, survey, and in-depth interview, it can be concluded that, for the past fifteen years, changes are divided into three main periods based on external and internal factors.

#### *Period 1 (2007–2012)*

In this period, the main external factor was the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007–2012) emphasizing social capital enhancement and allocating benefits to people for their wellbeing and higher quality of life. The town stagnation, as the main internal factor, led to emigration of Songkhla people. The other factor was safety concern in the area especially at nighttime. This resulted from increasing numbers of foreign workers in the fishing industry in Songkhla. They live on the boats anchored at the Pier near Nakhon Nok Road. Their night lifestyle of drinking and hanging out around clubhouses threatened peaceful nights, and the area became crime-prone. Local people thus avoided going to that area, especially in the evening, to stay away from harm and crime. Nevertheless, these factors led to the conservation movements of Songkhla by implementing cultural capital, namely, architecture and cultural heritage in the old town area, as well as by

making use of social capital derived from the relationship between civil society and the people. The participatory process gradually instigated physical development and helped create a casual contact between the governmental sector and the people. Even though Songkhla at that time had neither a conservation policy nor specific regulations on conservation, the strength and public participation were remarkable. This could have happened because the civil society group and local people could consult and discuss the common purpose to move Songkhla toward a tangible change, and to promote Songkhla's recognition. In 2010, Songkhla was declared as a National Old Town by the Committee for Conservation and Development of Rattanakosin and Old Towns. Consequently, Songkhla became more well-known.

#### *Period 2 (2013–2017)*

In 2012, the key external factors were the 11<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012–2016), and the agreement on cooperation with ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. There was also, the implementation of the National Tourism Strategy Development Plan for the first time. These policy factors became major drives to Songkhla to be developed as a tourist destination. However, the loss of its leader, "Mr. Peera Tantiseranee", then Mayor, who was assassinated, was an important turning point that made Songkhla earnestly apply participatory process to cultural conservation and formally establish Songkhla Heritage Trust, an important local organization which has played role in the cultural heritage conservation and management. The organization aimed to nominate Songkhla to World Heritage List; therefore, it has worked in collaboration with governmental organization, private sector and academic sector effectively for the purpose. For instance, the PTT Exploration and Production company and Chevron have contributed to the Songkhla toward World Heritage Town Project. Furthermore, Civil Society called N.A.S. has participated in this project by creating arts as means to create a good relationship with the locals. There are 4 academic institutions involved in the project, of which the major contributor is Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, which has been working closely with Songkhla Heritage Trust. The system of collaboration in Songkhla is 3+1, that is, the collaboration of local government, civil society, local people, private sectors and academic institutes. The project and its activities have resulted in renovation and selling of several old buildings which are tangible cultural capital. Without proper design guidelines, the authenticity of Songkhla's architecture is affected negatively. Furthermore, the tourism trend is



an incentive that entices people of the young generation back to the hometown and attracts outside entrepreneurs. Therefore, social capitals, social norms, and the working process were totally different from those of the pioneers and former conservation groups.

### Period 3 (2018–2022)

From the results of conservation, the Twenty-Year National Strategic Plan (2017–2036), the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan, and National Tourism Strategic Plan 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase, focusing on a balanced development in all dimensions, along with the tourism campaign of “Thainess” and application of researches and technology to cope with the more complex changes are external factors that increase popularity of Songkhla as a tourism destination and study area for research. The government and municipality of Songkhla carried out urban development projects as part of conservation schemes, for instance, installation of underground electrical wiring, and construction of parking areas to reduce the traffic problem in the old town. Songkhla Municipality Ordinance 2017 was issued to control physical change of buildings in old town; however, the enactment has been ineffective due to lack of awareness. Moreover, the contents of the ordinance do not cover the protection of authenticity, resulting in the loss of authenticity after renovation. This occurred in many cases of conservation attempts. Nevertheless, the collaboration movements have become more active, for instance, creative entrepreneur groups have continued working with the locals by holding creative events together, N.A.S. has decreased its role and cooperated more with creative entrepreneurs, whereas Songkhla Heritage Trust remains the core coordinator between governmental organization and other outside stakeholders on the Songkhla toward World Heritage Town mission. However, the limitation of the number of actual workers and budget are obstacles to the connection between Songkhla Heritage Trust and local people. In 2022, “Songkhla Towards World Heritage Foundation” was founded as a new organization, which has parallel or possibly overlapping roles with the Songkhla Heritage Trust. It seems that the Songkhla Heritage Trust has decreased their role after the Upstream Process to evaluate Songkhla preparedness and criteria for the World Heritage Site by experts from ICOMOS. In the meantime, the number of outside organizations who come to conduct researches and development projects are continuing to rise, which could have resulted from the social and economic-driving policy of the central government.

**Table 1** Conclusion of Participatory Process on Songkhla Old Town 2007–2022

The First Phase of the Participation Process (2007–2012)		The Second Phase of the Participation Process (2013–2017)		The Third Phase of the Participation Process (2018–2022)	
External Factors	Internal Factors	External Factors	Internal Factors	External Factors	Internal Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007–2011)</li> <li>Recovery from an Economic Bubble</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Songkhla City was stagnant at its peak.</li> <li>The working-age population moved out of the area.</li> <li>The city was not safe at night.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012–2016)</li> <li>ASEAN Community in 2015</li> <li>The First National Tourism Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a loss of participative leaders.</li> <li>Songkhla Old Town began to catch people's attention. A large number of agencies in the area were interested in it and joined more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Strategy (2018–2037)</li> <li>The Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021)</li> <li>The Second National Tourism Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elites collected and renovated old buildings in a unique style.</li> <li>There was an increase in the number of creative entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>

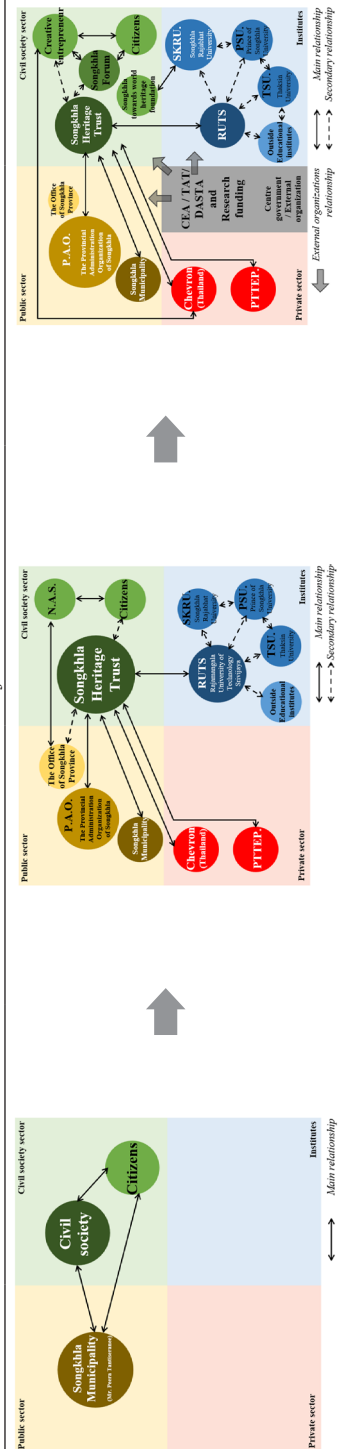


Table 1 Continued

The First Phase of the Participation Process (2007–2012)			The Second Phase of the Participation Process (2013–2017)			The Third Phase of the Participation Process (2018–2022)		
External Factors	Internal Factors	Capital	External Factors	Internal Factors	Capital	External Factors	Internal Factors	Capital
Capital	<i>Social Capital:</i> The main relationship among Songkhla city municipality, civil society, and people. <i>Cultural Capital:</i> Old buildings and the city area were still authentic. Nineteen old buildings were renovated.		<i>Social Capital:</i> Songkhla Provincial Administrative Organization played a more active role. It primarily related to Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya and Songkhla Heritage Trust; however, the relationship with people began to decline. <i>Cultural Capital:</i> People renovated 52 old buildings while the Songkhla city municipality built a city gate and a harbour.			<i>Social Capital:</i> It was similar to the second phase, but the entrepreneurs, people, and Songkhla Forum have a primary relationship, and all have a secondary relationship with Songkhla Heritage Trust. <i>Cultural Capital:</i> 130 old buildings were renovated. The Songkhla City Municipality put electric wires underground, built car parks, and the Kid+Dee building, where Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya rented a space for a cultural co-working space		
Participation	They were both formal according to the social norms and informal according to folkways, like talking in the tea circle or at home. There were still no legal ways, but the mayor of the Songkhla city municipality was a driving mechanism of participation in the levels of consultation up to organizing events.		Participation	Social norms were still similar to the first phase, but they started to be different for new generations who favoured informal working styles and creative activities. There was still no legal way, but Songkhla Heritage Trust was a driving mechanism of participation. Having participation in all four sectors, the private sector was a mechanism that helped reduce the limitations of the public sector. The participation of the government sector and civil society was at the level of consultation up to organizing events, but the people only participated in the commenting level.	Participation	Participation	There was a difference between pioneer generation and new generation, or creative entrepreneurs, who did not favor formal ceremonies but preferred creative activities. Meanwhile, the municipal law was declared; however, it lacked efficiency in controlling. Songkhla Heritage Trust, a major driving mechanism in the previous period, started to weaken. The participation style was the social capital volunteer. Therefore, it was not thoroughly and equally acknowledged. The levels of participation varied according to the project types.	
Outcomes	Songkhla became known, resulting in more interest from outside agencies, and was declared a site of the old town by the Rattanakosin Conservation and Development Committee in 2010.		Outcomes	Songkhla was in the development process to be a tourist attraction. There were agencies and private sectors interested in the area and more joined. People started to renovate old buildings. In addition, there was a real estate sale and purchase.	Outcomes	Songkhla was affected by the various plans, through the project running of government sectors, independent entities, and a large number of research funding agencies. The value of old buildings was high, but they lost their authenticity due to the lack of knowledge and ineffective laws. Creative entrepreneurs tended to be participative leaders in the future while Songkhla Heritage Trust began to weaken. Songkhla Rajabhat University founded to establish, “Songkhla Towards World Heritage Foundation”, but the roles of the foundation were not clear and might overlap with those of Songkhla Heritage Trust.		

## Result and Discussion

From semi-structure in-depth interview and on-site survey, 3 compelling issues were identified as impacts of Songkhla Old Town's cultural heritage conservation and management. Details are discussed as follows:

### *Issue 1: Stakeholders' Tools and Mechanisms Affecting Participation*

Based on results of survey and interviews, the analysis found that all four groups of stakeholders use tools and mechanisms to work on the preservation and management of Songkhla Old Town's cultural heritage. The summary is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 provides a conclusion that all stakeholders have their own tools and mechanisms. The outstanding point in Songkhla Old Town's participation is that the business sector joins in order to fill the financial gap in the local government's budget. The 'Songkhla Heritage Trust' Association plays a coordinating role for all stakeholders. Due to human resources and budget limitations, their efficiency has declined. However, some entrepreneurs have expressed their views that 'the role of a leader and communicator for participation should be carried out under the administration of Songkhla Municipality based on the local government's duty to communicate with the people in the area' (Entrepreneur 1, interview, December 2021). However, due to the administrative structure of the municipality, which lacks a directly responsible unit, it is currently unable to function in this regard. Based on all the information, it can be concluded that tools and participation mechanisms still face some obstacles, including:

- The absence of a leader and a platform that would allow every stakeholder to collaborate effectively with a clear structure.
- The absence of tools to preserve the value and authenticity of cultural heritage assets, such as old buildings.
- The absence of tools and mechanisms to support and maintain existence of social capital, as participation depends on interpersonal relationships.

**Table 2** Analysis about the effects of participation tools and mechanisms

Local Government	Stakeholders			Tools	Participation Mechanisms	Outcome
	Songkhla Municipality			Municipal Act and Design Guidelines.	Conducting through 'Songkhla Heritage Trust' Association	
Civil Society and Resident	Songkhla PAO.			Policy Support	Supporting the goal of 'Songkhla to World Heritage Site' by providing financial support for academic activities, through the 'Songkhla Heritage Trust' Association.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Municipal Act does not yet cover the preservation and protection of physical authenticity, and there is a lack of communication with local resident. As for design guidelines, they have not been officially announced for use.</li> <li>• The 'Songkhla Heritage Trust' association, which is the main civil society group, lacks communication with the community.</li> <li>• An outstanding financial contributor to strengthen the process and collaborate with the municipality.</li> </ul>
	Songkhla Heritage Trust			Setting the goals 'Songkhla to World Heritage Site' and Academic method to preserve and revive Songkhla Old Town.	Social relationships with local government, the education, the private sector, and public company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective in building awareness about the development of Songkhla into a world heritage site with general society.</li> <li>• Lack of participation with public due to human resources limitation, resulting in lack of awareness and engagement from local resident.</li> </ul>



Table 2 Continued

Stakeholders		Tools	Participation Mechanisms	Outcome
Community	Community	Opinion, participation, and personal financial support.	Individual relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good participation, but there is a lack of awareness. They have the opportunity to engage in the public sector and the main civil society projects in one-way perception through listening.</li> </ul>
	Entrepreneur	Opinion, participation, and personal financial support.	Personal relationships between entrepreneur and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High participation due to direct benefits from tourism, which are influenced by various projects in the Songkhla Old Town area.</li> </ul>
Private Sector	Private business company	Providing financial support for the goal of 'Songkhla to World Heritage Site' by PTT Exploration and Production; PTTEP and Chevron Corporation provide financial support for creative cultural heritage activities.	Conducting with the 'Songkhla Heritage Trust' Association.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fill the gap in local government's budget.</li> <li>• Support civil society to fasten the process.</li> </ul>
	Education Sector	Research	Conducting with Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get the participation from all stakeholders, but limited work due to research budget. Resulting in lack of consistency and not having a significant impact on the area.</li> </ul>

### Issue 2: Social Capital is Decreasing Gradually

Based on the interviews, Songkhla has an unidentified leader and does not have a platform to gather people. This means all groups operate their project based on their conditions and readiness. While Songkhla Heritage Trust is recognized as voluntary organization, entrepreneurs and local people work as individual volunteers. This implies that the participation process of Songkhla is conducted in form of "Volunteer from the foundation of social capital". The advantage of this kind of participation is the freedom and flexibility of attendants, which lead to faster moves and low impact from structural problems and limitation from government. They work for free and each group operates under their own capability and limitation, with a disadvantage on continuation. Some projects can bring participatory process to practicing level or mutual benefit groups only, while there are many projects that allow people to join to inform only. This is considered unfair for participants. Therefore, this kind of participation is not only an intermittent operation but also a diminishment of the number of social capitals due to lack of the rules or commitment to attend to the conservation project.

### Issue 3: Cultural Capital: Quantity and Quality are not Balanced

Based on the survey of architecture of three periods, government, private sector and people had shown collaboration in conservation and renovation of historic buildings and community environment for, 202 buildings (Table 3). Among these 202 buildings, 42 were renovated by tenants themselves, which is 20.8% from all numbers of renovated buildings. This is an interesting statistic showing the tenants' willingness to carry out building renovation by self-funding.

As seen in Table 3, it is evident that in Period 1, there were only 19 buildings in restorations by local residents, primarily for residential purposes. During Periods 2 and 3, Songkhla Old Town has been driven by public policies to become a tourist town, as proposed in the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan and the Second National Tourism Development Plan. Additionally, Songkhla is designated as a National Old Town which has been planned for World Heritage nomination. Therefore, the renovation and conservation movements have led to buying and selling of houses as well as other conservation-related activities. While there have been numerous restorations of old buildings in terms of quantity, the quality aspect reveals that

some old buildings have been beautified and have lost authenticity. For instance, the restoration of Pun Thao Kong Ancestral Shrine which resulted in a noticeable change from the original Chinese Hokkien architectural style.

This indicates a situation of lacking of efficiency of legal tools of, both the Municipality Ordinance and the Monuments Act. Issarathumnoon (2022, p. 6-4), has concluded in their research that “All the primary laws can provide protection and support for cultural heritage in certain areas. In other areas, there are heritages that have not received protection, including buildings and areas that are not officially registered as archaeological sites but are valuable. This includes some heritage sites in private sector possession”. This suggests the reason why the authenticity of heritage buildings has been continuously diminishing.

## Conclusion

According to the conceptual framework, this study aims to investigate how the relationship between cultural capital, social capital, and social norms of Songkhla potentially impacts the engagement of people in the conservation and management of cultural heritage. The findings, from the previous practices to the current situation, are highlighted as follows:

1. In the light of cultural capital, ancient buildings are regarded as a valuable cultural asset of Songkhla's

old town. However, at present, some of these historic buildings have deteriorated due to a lack of awareness and knowledge in building restoration, as well as the weakness in local regulations regarding protection of value and authenticity.

2. In terms of social capital, the traditional lifestyle in Songkhla's old town, such as “Ngan liang nam cha”, a financial support by organizing tea party, has continuously had social practices that the pioneer generation and entrepreneurs engage to raise funds to repair Muslim prayer building of the Bamrungsard School at Muang district, Songkhla province or to raise funds for organizing activities for the elderly. The tea party is considered as a traditional way of life and an activity that is open to all to participate in and contribute to. However, such may not sufficiently help promote the relationship between the three social capital levels when compared with the discrepancy in managing and treatment of cultural heritage between the pioneer group and the entrepreneurs, which may result in the decrease of social capital quality.

3. Regarding the organizations, it can be seen that various organizations have become more involved in the conservation efforts. The current type of participation is a “voluntary social capital” nature, which is strength. Nonetheless, Songkhla's old town still lacks inspiring leadership, social platform or suitable model situation to build involvement, leading to ambiguity in the participatory process.

**Table 3** The quantity of restoration buildings and areas divided by three period

Renovation of old buildings and environment	Period 1 B.E. 2550–2555	Period 2 B.E. 2556–2560	Period 3 B.E. 2561–2565	Total
Songkhla Municipality	-	2 areas including city gate and port	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 building</li> <li>• Install underground power lines on 2 streets</li> <li>• Construct a parking lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 city gate and 1 port</li> <li>• 1 building</li> <li>• Install underground power lines on 2 streets</li> <li>• Construct a parking lot</li> </ul>
Resident	19 buildings	52 buildings	130 buildings	201 buildings
Total	19 buildings	52 buildings	131 buildings	202 buildings



**Figure 5** Renovation of Pun Tao Kong Shrine; (A) Before Renovation, (B) After Renovation

Source: Tanrattanapong (2022)

Based on the current situation and external factors resulting, which are development plans at both national and local levels, the following trends can be predicted for the future of Songkhla:

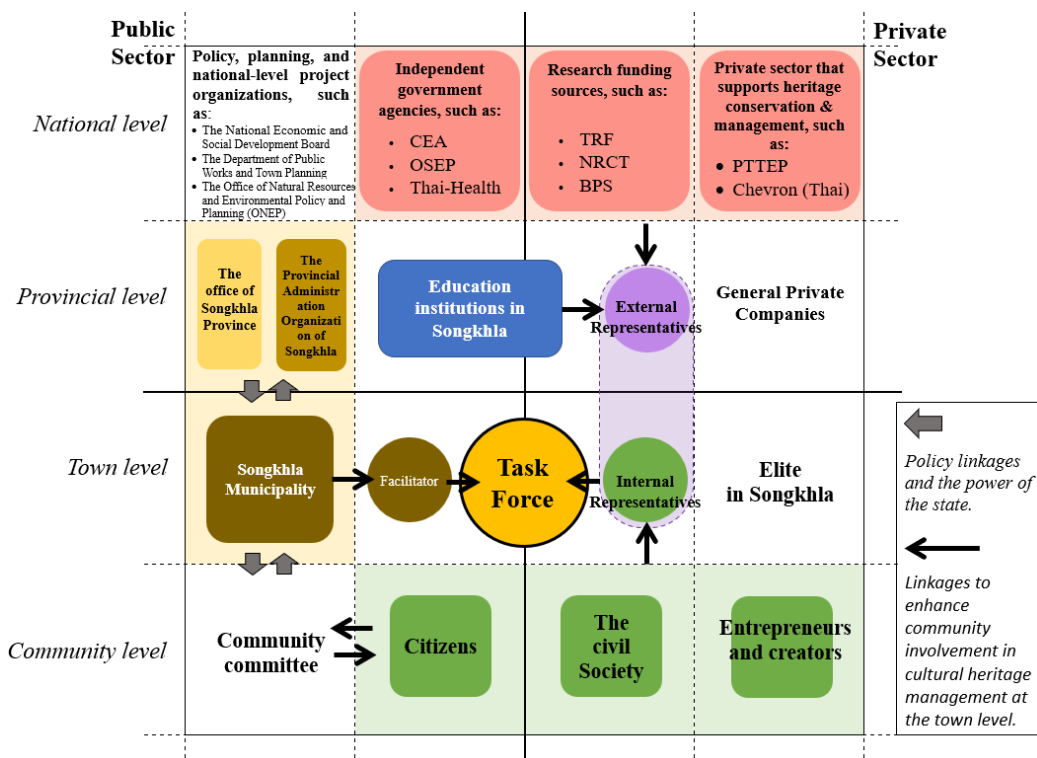
- More stakeholders with overlapping operation.
- Decrease of authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage.
- Gentrification and changing lifestyle.

## Recommendations

Within the context of organic collaboration based on relationship among people whose participation in the management of cultural heritage in the form of volunteerism without clear structure, or non-linear form, there are distinct drawbacks not unique to Songkhla old town but to other old towns in Thailand as well. These issues and circumstances are different from other countries' cultural heritage management. With the challenges and trends as mentioned, two recommendations are provided to facilitate the development of participation in the conservation and management of cultural heritage in Songkhla Old Town, which may also be duplicated to other old towns in Thailand.

## The Collaboration of Stakeholders to Promote a Participatory Cultural Heritage Management System

The study found that the civil society sector and new-generation business owners, as well as the academic sector, agree that the Songkhla Municipality is suitable for leading cultural heritage management and foster collaboration. However, the municipal representative stated that "This role and responsibility should belong to the municipality. But we lack personnel and budget for operation." (Songkhla Municipal representative, personal communication, November 2021). In this case, Songkhla's situation may be similar to that of many old towns in Thailand. Therefore, this article proposes the formation of a stakeholder group to collaboratively work in a "Task Force" format, with the municipality serving as the facilitator. The facilitator's role is to act as a coordinating unit to promote cultural heritage management and participation among various stakeholders, with external committees including, local educational institutions, and private sector supporters, or potentially, government agencies and research funding sources while representatives from civil sector, general public, and creative business group can participate as internal committee members.



**Figure 6** Relationship of stakeholder groups for collaborative cultural heritage management.

The establishment of a task force will facilitate coordination between public and private sectors at both national and provincial levels, as well as with the civil society, individuals, and creative entrepreneurs in the local context. This collaborative approach is instrumental in addressing the aforementioned issues. Moreover, this task force can decide and allocate proper projects and initiatives from both the public and private sectors external to the local community, according to the respective group's skills, interests and expertise to catalyze implementation. This approach fosters mutual recognition through formal and informal dialogues among the people of Songkhla, enhancing the autonomy and capability of each group to manage these initiatives with their social capital. This, in return, supports the Songkhla Old Town to accommodate a wide range of activities, including traditional ceremonies and creative events.

Consequently, the "Task Force" will provide an appropriate collaborative framework without burden to the local government. In addition, this type of "committee" can be further developed to address other issues, such as:

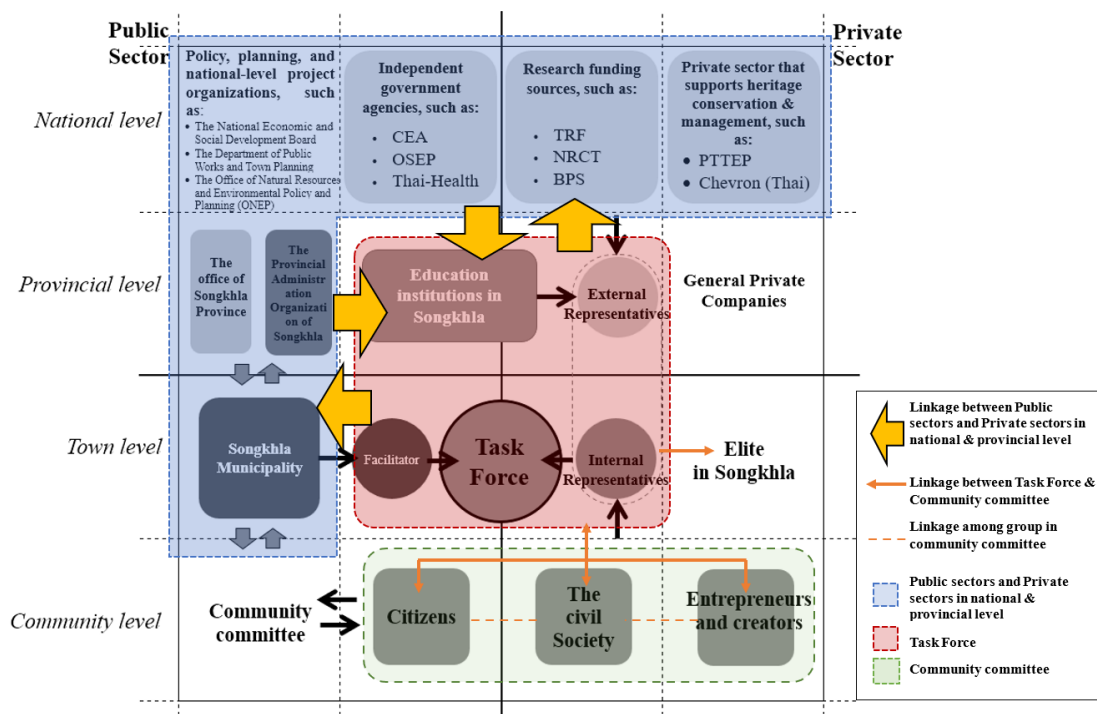
- Integrating community requirements and opinions into a legal framework. The task force can organize a forum to discuss with different representatives in order to

have a consensus to create a "Community Constitution" if everyone practices and agrees. This constitution can be further elevated to local ordinances or municipal laws.

- Establishing incentive measures for preserving the authenticity of cultural heritage. This can be done through recognition, accolades, and creation of social acceptance, rewarding can be applied, as most people seek social recognition more than economic rewards alone.

- The development of this "Task Force" into an organization with a mandate to generate revenue, such as a social enterprise group or even progressing towards a company through a Public-Private-People Partnership (4P). This transition to a revenue-generating entity serves the financial support and sustainability required for cultural preservation.

- To prevent the issue of gentrification, the "Task Force" can facilitate cooperation with relevant agencies involved in creative business development, including the Office of Creative Economy Promotion and the Office for Promotion of Social Enterprise, among others. This involvement allows these agencies to participate in transferring and developing business models for existing entrepreneurs, new entrepreneurs, and local leaders, contributing to local business sustainability while preserving the cultural heritage.



**Figure 7** The linkage between working team, public sector, private sector and locals

## Exploring Common Issues to Foster Cultural Heritage Management Participation.

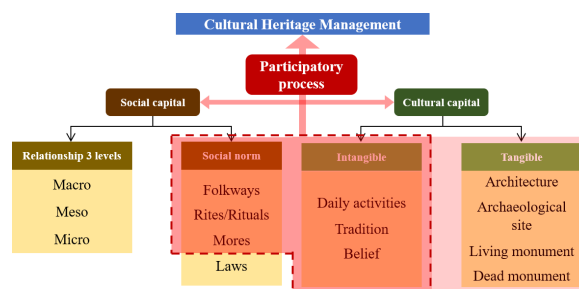
In the conservation of historic buildings or the revitalization of old towns, it is common for practitioners to employ participatory approaches to engage stakeholders in cultural heritage management. However, such endeavors often encounter challenges and may not acquire comprehensive participation from all relevant parties. From the case study of Songkhla Old Town, recommendations are provided on how to identify common issues for fostering participation in cultural heritage management. The findings have the potential to be applied in the management of cultural heritage in various old towns across Thailand. This process consists of three primary steps as outlined below.

*Step 1* Assess the relationships among the three levels of social capital. This assessment seeks to determine the nature of the relationships at each level and emphasize the significance of cultural heritage types.

*Step 2* Analyse the societal foundation, with an emphasis on examining folkways and customs. Based on their social capital, this analysis aims to identify whether the three levels of stakeholders, continue to respect and engage in collective practices following specific folkways and customs. Then, it is to seek to identify common practices valued by stakeholders at all levels, considering daily activities, traditional ceremonies, or societal beliefs within the community.

*Step 3* Analyse the tangible and intangible cultural assets in the area to determine their cultural heritage types and their linkages to folkways and customs. Particularly, this step unveils an interesting issue when intangible cultural heritage often has a stronger association with folkways and customs in present-day than tangible heritage, as intangible heritage mainly consists of enduring customary practices that the people continue to observe. In contrast, private historic buildings are private property, not open to all, and public archeology sites may fail to accommodate present-day practices.

These two recommendations target to facilitate the integration of individuals in the engagement of culturally sustainable and well-organized heritage management systems. They, in addition, provide methods to identify common grounds among groups connected to cultural heritage. As a result, these approaches contribute to the preservation and management of cultural heritage while promoting both social and cultural capital, ensuring continuity and sustainability.



**Figure 8** The process of identifying common issues to participation

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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