The Sociopolitical Manifestation of Built Environment in Rural Thailand: Holistic Development for an Aging Society?

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ABSTRACT

Changes in demographic structures in an aging society have diminished farming employment and incomes of old residents of Talat Mai subdistrict, Angthong Province, Thailand. Under decentralization, the local government assumes primary development responsibility in managing the basic needs of citizens. This case study demonstrates how the local government uses the built environment—Wiset Chai Chan Historical Park Royalty Monument —as an instrument for community development to enhance life quality for old residents. This study examines ways in which the park's construction as a built environment are shaped and consequences due to community development as an aging society. Data was gathered by participatory action research (PAR), including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and artifacts. Local government representatives, geriatric residents, and subdistrict stakeholders were involved. The constructivism paradigm was used to analyze the local government's justifications for the park's construction, and the pathways model examines the park's impacts on community development and the aging society. Results are that the park construction as a landmark craft is mainly a sociopolitical construction, because of local government monarchist motivations and war legends to revive power symbols intertwined with memory politics. This research suggests potential improvements for the wellbeing of old citizens, community involvement, and economic growth.

Keywords: built environment, aging society, community development, sociopolitical construction, historical parks

INTRODUCTION

The aging phenomenon has become a global issue as a result of the global shift in demographics, which forces governments to plan for the resources, socioeconomic policies, and development initiatives that will better serve older persons and their communities in a variety of ways. The UN (2023) estimates that by 2050, there will be 1.6 billion people aged 65 and above. In 2023, Thailand's aging population grew significantly, accounting for 12.7 million individuals, or 19.3% of the country's total population (Bureau of Elderly Health, 2023). The proportion of older persons will continue to increase over the coming years. The built environment constructions for the aging population are usually justified by developments related to practical uses and tangible effects, such as age-friendly environments, mixed-generational housing, health, and well-being (Chen et al., 2022; Chindapol, 2025; Jiravanichkul et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2023; Tuckett et al., 2017). In order to promote sustainability, green spaces, health enjoyment, social interaction, and multigenerational communities, these arguments are based on the general trend of urban and community developments through concepts like new urbanism or landscape urbanism (Day, 2003; Duany, 2020; Garde, 2004; Newcastle University, 2024; Steiner, 2011). Park development is an important aspect of the built environment that is being strengthened by this trend. Its benefits, which are primarily ecologically friendly livelihoods, health benefits, and community involvement, can clearly be based on its scientific objectives. In the field of architecture, the built environment, such as a park or housing, has usually been studied as a stand-alone concept or with landscape design, inadequate a connection or analysis with the socio-political motivations behind the construction and its implications for community development with an emphasis on older people.

Despite the evident changes in the built environment sectors, there is a dearth of research that links practices in development projects (Pineo & Moore, 2021) and shows how the built environment serves symbolic and political purposes before evolving into the new theme of holistic aging development. This paper invites readers to consider the built environment from a socio-political perspective, recognizing that it is created through political memory and symbolic meaning with the specific Thai local context. The main topic does not focus specifically on history and local politics. The paper instead identifies how the built environment is primarily shaped by socio-political motivations or social constructions with symbolic meaning and interpretation, which subsequently serve as the development agenda for aging communities. This reflects the growing trend of combining social constructivism, aging development, and the built environment. The paper explores how the local government uses the built environment to serve a holistic development agenda for an aging society and rationales behind the creation of a built environment. The paper adopts the Wiset Chai Chan Historical Park Royalty Monument (WCCHPRM), which is situated in the Taladmai subdistrict of the Wiset Chai Chan district of Angthong province and has twelve statues of the war and the province's monarchy-related legends. About 25% of the population is 60 years of age or older, and most of them are middle-class to low-income farmers or general workers. The spatiality of the WCCHPRM is evolving while it is being built. Space transformation is a continuous process that reflects societal shifts and navigates the diverse requirements of inhabitants (Gürman & Buldan, 2024). This is evident in the choice to build the monument park featuring twelve monuments of regional soldiers rather than allocating the meager funds to tangible practical uses.

In light of the growing trend of integrating built environment and political implications to apply to aging and community development, the paper explores potentially novel views and ideas regarding monument park construction as built environment, political manifestation, and holistic aging development. In addition, the paper analyzes the interpretations of local government initiatives and the plans for the future of senior citizens through the establishment of memorial parks in Thailand's rural area. Since politics governs social behavior and economic activity, political forces are significant in architecture and the urban development process, which is inherently political (Srisat, 2023). The constructivism paradigm (Bryman, 2004) and the

pathways model (Mouratidis, 2021) are used in this paper to unfold the distinctive causes and implications of WCCHPRM. It also highlights the novel perspectives of aging development in relation to a built environment through socio-political perspectives that reflect specific relationships between the use of the past in the politics of memory and the current development towards aging in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The built environment is diverse and fulfills a range of functions for both individuals and society (Placino & Rugkhapan, 2024). The built environment encompasses all of the man-made areas where people live, work, and play, including residences, buildings, parks, transportation, infrastructure, and recreational areas (Hürlimann et al.,2022; Moffatt & Kohler, 2008; Mouratidis, 2021; Supply Chain Sustainability School, 2012). The term simply means the opposite of everything that is caused solely by nature or the unbuilt environment (Moffatt & Kohler, 2008). The built environment is clearly defined as the physical features of a town or city, such as parks, squares, walkways, and business signage, that facilitate human activity (Figueiredo et al., 2023). The built environment, however, is not limited to tangible spaces; it also connects to human imagination through socio-cultural products of spaces, which are subject to constant change (Hürlimann et al., 2022). In the field of architecture, the built environment has usually been studied as a stand-alone concept or in conjunction with landscape design, lacking links or analysis to the socio-political motivations behind the construction or its implications for community development with an emphasis on older people.

The built environment and older people are typically associated with physical fragility and health issues (Committee on an Aging Society, 1988; Figueiredo et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2023). Older people's lifestyles are significantly impacted by physical degeneration and disability, which prompts environmental changes to better meet their demands (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 1988). The design of the built environment for an aging society has been given top priority in order to promote the physical and mental well-being of senior citizens (Jiravanichkul et al., 2024). The creation of a constructed environment that responds to a sustainable and age-friendly society has been advocated by governments in charge of formulating policy (Chen et al., 2022). Being older people is associated with feelings like grief and anxiety, such the fear of falling because of one's physical weakness, which are also linked to overall health (Chindapol, 2025; Figueiredo et al., 2023). The built environment's meaning for older people is typically limited to its tangible, physical aspects, such as its design and health-promoting features. Conversely, older people from different socioeconomic backgrounds anxiety losing their jobs, relationships, and spiritual well-being. Accordingly, physical built environments can support the social and physical engagement of older adults, including their deliberate and driven participation in worthwhile activities or employment opportunities (Gripko & Joseph, 2024). Nonetheless, there are still not many studies that investigate further ramifications, particularly social, political, and symbolic-driven built building, where the goals of construction extend beyond the design for utilitarian functions and physical demands and health benefits.

The built monuments, which contain the symbolic meaning of the built environment, deeply reflect the connections of past events and political agenda. Examples of these include the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia, which depicts the civil war and brutal incidents that led to countless cruel torture and deaths during the Khmer Rouge regime in 1975-1979 (Mannergren et al., 2024), Memorial de 1968 in Mexico, and Spaces for Memory and Promotion of Human Rights (Ex ESMA) in Argentina, which recalls justice and human rights through the creation of space (Rufer, 2012). These governments draw on political memories of people or politics of memory. Likewise, the *Wiset Chai Chan Historical Park Royalty Monument* (WCCHPRM) in central Thailand is a monument park that depicts the discourse between local and national politics. Built environments, including historical parks and monuments, have provided meaning and identity for places. Place refers to an ideal locale and physical setting for social activity as geographically situated (Giddens, 2013). Places are socially constructed uniquely and

meaningfully through individual lived experience, usage, and imagery (Arafat, 2022). The place-making is associated with people's identities, social groups and community histories. There are different aspects of place-making in Thailand. Muhammad Arafat (2021) proposes that ethnicity creates a place in Malay-majority Southern Thailand, comprising Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. History is another essential aspect of the meaning construction of places through the built environment such as historical sites and monument parks. Ayutthaya is a city in Thailand replete with historical monuments and other tourist attractions (Thanvisitthpon, 2016; Rattanathavorn et al., 2014). Phitsanulok is another historical site as a major municipality in Northern Thailand, with abundant cultural heritage and political memory of royal sacrifice and place-making (Navapan & Oonprai, 2019). Today, both Ayutthaya and Phitsanulok demonstrate community development potential and benefits for local residents based on tourism promotion. However, to succeed, historical sites require holistic development, including transportation networks and spatial links. Planning, design, and management strategies become community development challenges in developing historic sites in Thailand. For example, Ayutthaya had a limited transportation system and infrastructure development (Thanvisitthpon, 2016; Rattanathavorn et al., 2014), while river-enclosed Phitsanulok lacks spatial links between historical sites, waterways, and other public open spaces (Navapan & Oonprai, 2019). These instances show factors affecting the success of exploring the built environment for parks, monuments and historical sites as community development. Likewise, for community development and aging groups, historical sites are presented for local communities to generate sustainable economies (Lindberg, 2006); this becomes more challenging when applied to an aging group with decreasing strength and economic activity. Aging is a prevalent issue requiring local community support through the concept of sustainable development, with older adults expected to dwell near parks or green environments (Xiang & Mei, 2024) and related sociocultural settings (Nilphat et al., 2023).

Combining historical parks as built environments and an aging society, construction of a rural historical park in Thailand will be discussed. The paper contributes to the growth of knowledge about local administration in rural Thailand to enhance life quality for older people by using constructivism and pathways to demonstrate sociopolitical effects of the built environment as well as holistic community development potential for income, physical health, and spiritual wellbeing.

The Wiset Chai Chan Historical Park Royalty Monument (WCCHPRM)

The park is located in the Taladmai subdistrict of the Wiset Chai Chan district of Angthong province in central Thailand, about 2.30 hours from Bangkok, the country's capital. The park's name, the *Wiset Chai Chan Historical Park Royalty Monument* (WCCHPRM), is derived from the district name, Wiset Chai Chan, which emphasizes the district's involvement in the wars to repel invasions. The phrase "Royalty Monument" denotes the utmost reverence and acknowledgment of the monarch's authority. Thai people view the monarchy as an essential institution that has long fostered a deep religious and spiritual belief in the royal family (Connors, 2007). The WCCHPRM is currently being built, with completion anticipated in 2026. The WCCHPRM's primary goals are (1) to recognize outstanding locals who have made significant contributions to the province and the country and to show the respect that the people have for the heroes and monarchy; (2) to develop the subdistrict as a tourist destination; and (3) to boost the local economy and generate employment opportunities for locals, especially older people. The WCCHPRM will eventually become a popular tourist destination, according to the local administration. Tourists will be drawn to this landmark, which will then lead to economic activity. Locals and senior citizens with limited income could bring their agricultural goods or services, such as cooking, massage, or local music brands, to generate extra cash for potential events. The monuments to twelve local legends are the focal point of the WCCHPRM, which thereafter expands its operations to the park, fortifies the green space, and has health-promoting benefits. The belief in the protectors of

the great person represented by monuments is what makes the WCCHPRM popular; believers come and pray for protection, opportunities, or wishes. Usually, the prayer would return to show appreciation and reverence once the desire was granted, and occasionally it would bring flowers or other altar items.

Rajabhakti Park, one of Thailand's most well-known parks, was completed prior to the WCCHPRM and features notable figures' monuments. The Rajabhakti Park features monuments commemorating seven Thai monarchs from various eras who were regarded as the great because of their valor and paramount importance to Thailand. Built by the Royal Thai Army in 2014 and finished in 2015,

the park's primary purposes were to revere Thailand's former monarchs, act as a venue for army events, and serve as a knowledge park showcasing Thai history. There are some similarities between Rajabhakti Park's design and inspiration and WCCHPRM, but there are also differences in terms of level, positioning of territory, funding source, and long-term implications. The former king's monuments, which are constructed across the Rajabhakti Park and serve primarily as places of worship along with military and political memory, are funded by the army. WCCHPRM, on the other hand, creates monuments of commoners or king troops who lived in or were connected to the Wiset Chai Chan district and made contributions to the country and its rulers. The WCCHPRM

Figure 1

Locations of the WCCHPRM and Angthong Province

Note. This figure shows the locations of the WCCHPRM and Angthong province, which are situated in central Thailand. Adapted from *The Locations of the Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization and Angthong Province*, by Google Map, 2025. Copyright 2025 by Google LLC.

budget is derived from a number of sources, and the building's objectives have expanded from its beginnings, which primarily aimed to illustrate the building's royalty to community and aging development.

The WCCHPRM is now being built, and it began later than Rajabhakti Park; however, the local government stated that the concept for the monument's construction had begun to be discussed in the area in 2005. But due to financial constraints, the attempt was unable to begin. In Thailand, many provincial administrations encounter the common challenges of limited resources, imprecise planning and improper partnerships (Prasittisopin et al., 2024). The initial construction project began unofficially in 2016 in the area of the Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO), as shown in Figure 1, and the SAO leader pushed for the casting of the first statue of Phra Rat Manu in 2017. The sculpture's generosity and royalty allowed the first monument to be cast gradually. The sculptor was ready to begin work without payment, stating, "You pay me when the chief finds money." The price of each monument is about 250,000 baht, or $7,353 USD[1] The statues' casting costs were covered by donations because the government budget does not cover them. Although up to 12 million baht has been allocated for the WCCHPRM construction later in 2021 and 2022, it is insufficient to cover the building of all adjacent areas, which totals 21Rai[2]. In 2024, 149 million baht was approved by the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning to build WCCHPRM and assisted with the park's further design. The park will include the following features in addition to the twelve monuments: a waiting pavilion, a multipurpose parking lot, a reception area, a public restroom, a playground and exercise area, a meeting plaza, a green relaxation area, an activity plaza, a performance and recreation area, etc. Although more amenities that complement the new urban design will be added to the park, the monuments remain the focal point for locals. The 12 sculptures that make up the WCCHPRM were considered to have made significant contributions to the province, and some of them are among the most well-known figures in Thai national history with a political memory.

Figure 2

Monuments of Wiset Chai Chan Great Persons

Note. This figure shows images of all 12 monuments cast in the WCCHPRM, which include significant subdistrict contributions. Under the monument's images of this figure, the words "Ancestors of Wiset Chai Chan" is described in Thai. From *warrior of Wiset Chai Chan,* by Facebook, 2020 (https://www.facebook.com/sapwiset/photos/a.478702049304644/832810 930560419). Copyright 2020 by Facebook.

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[1] 1 USD = 34 Baht

[2] 1 Rai = 4 Ngan (or 1600 sq. m.)

The design of monuments honoring Wiset Chai Chan's notable figures that deal with war and national issues is depicted in Figure 2. The tale behind the monument is largely about sacrifice and monarchy, yet the majority of them feature weapons—only a coxswain and a monk, the third and seventh. King Naresuan of Siam (1590–1605) chose *Phra Rat Manu*, the first statue from the left, as an aide in his battle against Burma, which ultimately led to Siam's liberation under Burma's control. "*Ok phra wiset chai chan*," the royal official given the title of Wiset Chai Chan in 1916 after being tasked with overseeing this district, is pictured second from the left. The suppression of the Ngiao Rebellion, which involved an ethnic group from Burma entering northern Thailand, was one of his notable accomplishments. "*Phanthai Norasing*," a coxswain who is praised for his integrity toward the King Sanphet VIII and national regulations, comes in third. Even though the king changed his punishment, he voluntarily gave up his life in 1704 to enforce the law after an accident wrecked the royal barge during the King's water voyage. The fourth is "*Khun rong palat chu*," a valiant warrior who assembled troops in Wiset Chai Chan and dedicated his strength and efforts to fighting Burma in the Alaungpaya battle under King Ekkathat of Ayudthaya in 1759–1760. *Dok*, *Thongkaew*, *Phra ajarn Thammachot*, *Thaen*,

Chot, *In*, and *Muang* rank fifth through eleventh. In 1766, they all battled valiantly together against the Burmese troops who were moving the army through the Wiset Chai Chan area. This battle symbolized the bravery and selflessness of the Wiset Chai Chan, the local warriors known as *Bang Rajan*—the Legend of the Village Warriors—who are capable of defending the country. Even though Phra Ajarn Thammachot was a monk, he is nevertheless regarded as a hero of war since he conducted the sacred ritual to uplift all those involved in the Bang Rajan war. This demonstrates the symbolic meaning and particular values that Thai people have associated with religion and spirituality since ancient times. Lastly, there is "*Khun Ratanawut*," who fought bravely till a right-hand cut. He participated in the Nine Army Battle (1785–1786) against Burma during the Rattanakosin period of King Rama I's rule. Khun Ratanawut's memory is one of a ruthless defense of the nation without self-defense.

All of the monuments associate with the monarchy or war stories about rescuing the province and the country. Their sacrifice and royalty to the monarch, the community (Wiset Chai Chan), and the country are the reasons behind the casting of these monuments.

Figure 3

The Wiset Chai Chan Historical Park Royalty Monument's Planned Landscape (WCCHPRM)

Note. This figure shows the master plan of the WCCHPRM, which includes the twelve monuments, the exercise area, the multipurpose parking lot, the activity plaza, the green relaxation space, and more. From *Town & Country Planning and the Department of Public Works*, by Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization, 2024. Copyright 2024 by Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization.

Numerous governmental and private sector organizations have consistently contributed more than 150 million baht toward the park's creation, which is in line with sociopolitical values toward the monarchy and the country. Figure 3 shows the anticipated final version of the WCCHPRM, which is scheduled for completion by 2026 and will be used for a variety of community purposes that promote a healthy lifestyle and the local economy in addition to serving as a tourist attraction and local market.

Build the Environment with Constructivism and Politics of Memory

The WCCHPRM building was motivated by the war and local collective memory. Its implications derive first from the monarch's as well as local and national royalty's manifestation of a social construction grounded in constructivism, which includes both the justifications for creating and using. According to Thongsawang et al. (2024), constructivism is the existence of knowledge derived from the interpretation and construction of society members or those who study. Since the main goal of the WCCHPRM building is to have political and symbolic value, this relates to constructivism. The primary source of the initiative effort is the political agenda that is entangled with political memory. In situations where politics of memory cannot be neutral, it refers to institutional modalities of dealing with a violent past by examining narratives of past events that highlight both those that were in a strong position and those that were left in recognition to highlight contemporary formulation, political urgencies, and socio-historical necessities of justification (Rufer, 2012). The exploitation of the past to justify present powers is another aspect of politics of memory, which tends to produce current memory lapses that facilitate state operations (Kaasik-Krogerus et al., 2019). According to Azizbeyli (2018), the concept of politics of memory also encompasses collective memory, which transcends individual recollection, and the expansion of national memory into global memory, which involves articulating various locations from local remembering to a broader context. Halbwachs (1992, as cited in Azizbeyli, 2018) as saying that communal memory is socially constructed, shared, and seen as an inherent aspect of social life that is always being reframed and reinterpreted to suit various purposes.

The implications of political memory, also known as politics of memory, are similar in three ways: first, it uses historical data; second, it shares collective memory and makes it publicly visible; and third, it is socially constructed with the intention of justifying government actions or advancing the creators' own agendas. Monuments are a clear example of politicizing memories since they symbolize national identity, provide psychological support, and provide the community with a sense of continuity (Azizbeyli, 2018). A monument park serves as an example of the physical environment's social and political construction, which legitimized the present administration, political aspirations, and local elite politics. Politics is an integral aspect of social life, encompassing a variety of interests, backgrounds, and agendas that overlap with one another (Çıdık, 2023). Memory is used to establish social approval that can be put forward, legitimized, or suspended (Hensch, 2023). Constructivism and the politics of memory are compatible because both demand interpretation beyond the objective and physical and have latent meaning. In reaction to the construction of a place with political attitudes and goals, the constructivist idea can be described. Objectivism, which holds that social facts and knowledge are neutral and value-free, is opposed by constructivism, which explains that social facts are produced and understood by members of society (Bryman, 2004). People give meaning to things, decide how to behave, and engage in social activities through a succession of commonsense experiences (Schütz, 1962). The existence of social truths that include the justifications, attitudes, and viewpoints of individuals who establish and uphold the practices is linked to constructivism (Bryman, 2004). One needs to interpret it from their perspective and have experience in the context in order to comprehend its meanings, consequences, and motive. Accordingly, all landscapes are created and the result of culture (Spirn, 1996), and they have meaning that the audience may understand (Waldheim, 2016). The monument park and other architectural environments are socially constructed and have

political, cultural, and symbolic meanings. The WCCHPRM case highlights the connections between constructivism and the use of politics of memory to justify local government goals. It also illustrates how local and national politics interact, integrating local advocacy for community development for older persons.

Park, Development and Aging: The Pathways Model

The initial concept behind the monument park's construction was to promote political regimes and commemorate notable locals for their contributions to national politics, albeit it did not fully connect with the fundamentals of community development. Even though the WCCHPRM began with 12 monuments for political reasons, it quickly connects and changes into a massive monument park with many potential uses for the spaces that are anticipated to help older adults and community development.

The pathways model developed by Mouratidis (2021) relates subjective well-being (SWB) to the expected outcomes of the built environment. According to the model, the built environment, including land use and urban design, influences residents' experiences in a variety of domains, such as travel, leisure, employment, social interactions, residential well-being, emotional reactions, and health. These factors result in subjective well-being, which include happiness in reference to self-actualization and purpose in life, emotional well-being, also known as affect or hedonic well-being, and life satisfaction, or contentment with life in general (Mouratidis, 2021). The seven domains, or pathways, are considered a primary life domain that lie between the built environment and SWB (Diener, 2009; Mouratidis, 2021; Sirgy, 2012). Each domain can have an impact on one or more aspects of physical, mental, and spiritual health. For example, leisure and travel improve physical strengths, while social connections strengthen bonds between people, which has a positive impact on mental health. Aesthetic satisfaction with certain types of constructed environments, such as religious or sacred statues, can also improve spiritual health.

Initially, the park building was based on the political and symbolic objective to encourage community development. The pathways model connects the built environment and SWB applies to identify the novel perspectives of using the built environment. The decline of physical capacities, the possibility of loneliness from a partner passing away or children leaving the house, or low income due to lack of physical exertion and less competitiveness in comparison to younger ages are just a few of the reasons that older people are at risk. Due to social, economic, and demographic considerations, many older residents still lack the resources they need to sustain healthy lifestyles, which could hinder their ability to actively participate in society, enjoy their health, and lead fulfilling lives (Kumar et al., 2023). According to this model, the paper outlines how the park may grow into a holistic aging space through the involvement and voices of local governments, older citizens, and subdistrict stakeholders.

RESEARCH METHODS

The paper makes the argument that community development for older adults that integrates political agenda and political memory in the built environment—a monument park—is an emerging topic and way of looking at how the government, residents, and older adults in the rural Taladmai subdistrict manage the built environment interact with each other across important processes to continue the monument park and development project for older residents, the majority of whom come from low-income, general worker, and farming backgrounds. Urban planners have long studied the relationship between human behavior and the built environment, but there is still a shortage of research on the relationship between the built environment and human influences on well-being (Handy et al., 2002). In order to bridge the knowledge gap about the use of the built environment for community development in the rural Thai context, the study uses the pathways model to engage with pertinent stakeholders in the chosen area.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is chosen as the primary research approach because it necessitates intimate interaction between

researchers and participants to obtain insight into reasoning behind, attitudes toward, and meanings associated with park creation. To identify local issues and examine the data, PAR helps academic researchers and community partners collaborate (von Unger et al., 2022). Additionally, PAR makes it possible for academics to network with many stakeholders in the field and gather data from a variety of sources and actors, ensuring that underrepresented voices—like older people and low-income groups—are more fairly represented in knowledge constructs.

In order to gather pertinent data, the paper uses various techniques including observation, artifacts, and both quantitative and qualitative interviewing techniques under the PAR framework. A comprehensive trend of older residents' physical strengths, general health, and social characteristics (Chindapol, 2025) can be gleaned from a quantitative interview. According to Bryman (2004), qualitative interviews aid in gathering detailed information appropriate for constructionist and interpretivist knowledge and context, including the meanings embedded in social actors' narratives and behaviors (Pineo & Moore, 2021). A team of researchers conducted interviews with 506 cases, 400 older persons took part in quantitative interviews, while the remaining participants- which included entrepreneurs, local government representatives, senior citizens, and other pertinent Taladmai subdistrict stakeholders- participated in qualitative interviews, focus group interviews and the project evaluation process. Both participant and non-participant methods of observation have been used. In the field, a team of researchers observed activities such as going on field trips, participating in events at the elderly school, and going about their daily lives, such as cooking and sitting while working on the farm. Using images and videos of the government posted on social media, the study team examines how people engage and share their opinions about the monument park and senior community development in light of artifacts. Many methodological improvements that focus on the attitudes and beliefs of social groups can help researchers understand the thoughts and emotions of research participants (Fielding & Thomas, 2001). Following the ethical committee's issuance of the certificate of permission, data

gathering will begin in November 2022 and run through January 2024.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

The quantitative survey's results highlight the main components of older people's living conditions in terms of social relations, security, and physical and mental health. The two most important factors pertaining to the older residents of the subdistrict are employment and financial information. According to Table 1, the majority of the older adults in the Taladmai subdistrict are in their early senior years and are generally in good health, have limited resources, and are eager to earn more money through a variety of interests and additional jobs. The social relationships between senior citizens and the community, including their peers and neighbors, are satisfactory, indicating a generally good standard of living.

However, when considering the security level that encompasses the economic and employment areas, only 3% of the data is considered high. The subdistrict's older finances show money-related constraints. 31.78% of people make less than 2,500 baht, or about 74.75 USD, per month, whereas nearly 40% make between 187 and 75 USD, which is clearly limited and suggests income insecurity. The findings indicate that the welfare or state allowance is the base income of every respondent, with the range of state allowances broken down by age. Individuals aged 60-69 will receive 600 baht, or 18 USD, per month, while those aged 70-79 will receive 700 baht, or 21 USD, those aged 80-89 will receive 800-baht, or 24 USD, and those aged 90 and older will receive 1,000 baht, or 30 USD. However, in 2025, the government authorized a progressive increase in the living allowance, roughly increasing it to $3, $5, $6, and $7.5 USD, respectively. Although it is positive, the adding rate is not nearly enough to support a decent standard of living. Only 3% of people hold their own property, and 26.5% of people can rely on family for support. Due to the limited income and welfare, many people have an adverse view of income viability, believing it to be sufficient, and

occasionally it falls short of their daily needs. These factors, along with the fact that the majority of the population is in the early stages of aging and in good health, contribute to the need for additional jobs in order to supplement their limited income. When asked about their preferred extra jobs, older people tend to say "any," which includes labor, general labor, selling, and services; however, the most important requirement is that the job must be at or near their home. In their hometown, older people also work in crafts and agriculture. It is clear that older people require additional employment, and the local government must assist them in locating any jobs that they and other community members can perform.

It is the fact that many Thai local governments have limited funds (Prasittisopin et al., 2024), which makes it hard to set aside additional funds each year to significantly raise older people's welfare or allowance. The qualitative data provided results that pointed in the same direction. The local government leader in the Taladmai subdistrict was well aware of the population's poverty issue. As environmental challenges increase, farming success is strongly correlated with rainfall and weather, which has a substantial impact on income and productivity. As the cost of farming products rises and the environment changes, the local government looks for development programs to help ensure that locals have extra money to support their primary agricultural work.

"Water management is the key. We have lacked water for many years, so we can't grow the farming products...costs of farming chemicals, fertilizer and other farming supplies rise. It is very difficult, but we have no choice. We have to cultivate the rice anyway"

Pranot, Local leader (personal communication, December 1, 2022)

"They continued to grow rice because they were accustomed to it, even though they knew it was losing money due to water scarcity and rising farming expenses. Their lifestyle has been passed down from one generation to the next. Their primary occupation will not change, but we look for development initiatives or ways to raise locals' incomes and strengthen the local economy."

Thawit, a Senior local official (personal communication, December 1, 2022)

Table 1

Demographic and Socio-Economic Backgrounds of Older Persons in the Taladmai Subdistric

Living conditions	Profile distribution			Total
Age	60-69 = 42.70%	70-79 = 37.30%	80 up = 20.0%	100
Health	Good = 45.30%	Average = 46.00%	Not good = 8.70%	100
Social relations	High = 38.00%	Average = 51.00%	Low = 11.00%	100
Security	High = 3.00%	Average = 90.00%	Low = 7.00%	100
Yearly income (Baht)	Over 75k = 28.68%	75k-30,001 = 39.54%	Below 30k = 31.78%	100
Income sources	Welfare = 72.75%	Welfare and family = 26.50%	Welfare and rent = 0.75%	100
Income viability	Yes = 24.50%	Barely = 59.25%	No = 16.25%	100
Job preferences	Farming/livestock = 28.60%	Craft/processing products = 22.90%	Any, non-remote job = 48.50%	100

The local government is well aware that older people with little technological expertise are resistant to change and that they lack the resources or courage to invest in farming technology that could eventually boost their income and productivity. The local government can honor the province's heroes by creating a "space" that elevates the subdistrict and serves as a landmark. At the same time, the built environment can be utilized to support economic activity and strengthen the local economy.

> "*We look for our subdistrict's distinctive identity. We live in a farmland area. We don't have many opportunities to earn extra money. Therefore, we believe that by creating the monument park and transforming it into a tourist destination and historic city that can draw visitors and revenue, we will benefit on the province's ancient identity.*"

Supot, Head of local government (personal communication, August 31, 2023)

> "*The monument will be surrounded by tents, gift shops, stands selling agricultural goods, and places to honor our war heroes and legends. Older adults can easily travel to Monument Park to sell their goods or work as general workers supporting related activities. It is more beneficial than letting them sit around the house doing nothing. With the monthly state allowance plus the money we make from visitors or events, I would say we can make between 100 and 200 baht a day, which is enough to live on.*"

Narin, local older resident (personal communication, July 8, 2023)

The WCCHPRM, which serves both development and political memory and agenda, is hoped to strengthen the built environment. For almost ten years, the main goal of the subdistrict has been to push for the construction of the WCCHPRM. In 2024, the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning approved a new budget of up to 149 million baht, which is being used to build the WCCHPRM. This budget will include more plazas, pavilions, and multipurpose spaces in addition to the monuments. According to the local administration, their initial plan is to primarily construct 12 monuments and some of the moderate surrounding spaces to embellish the environment, as illustrated in figure 4. With the additional financing given to the subdistrict, the WCCHPRM grew significantly and had several kinds of implications.

Figure 4
The Constructed Monuments of Wiset Chai Chan's Notable Persons

Note. This figure shows the memorial park's early construction, which focused mostly on the monuments of the notable local ancestors. From *Town & Country Planning and the Department of Public Works*, by Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization, 2024. Copyright 2024 by Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization.

Political Manifestation and the Park's Symbolic construction

The local government first passionately stated that the main goals of the WCCHPRM are to commemorate the outstanding local leaders who have contributed to the province and the country and to demonstrate their royalty. Later, the local government expanded its construction goals to include creating the subdistrict's tourism attraction, which could boost the local economy and generate jobs for locals, especially older people, to which the locals would also respond and comprehend. When the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning allots funds, the goals of constructions from different media focus on the area's multiple uses that complement new urban or landscape design that emphasizes community uses as well as green and health promotion—outweighing the idea of royalty and paying tribute to the local hero. According to explicit and implicit manifestations, there are two levels of expression that can be distinguished from this perspective: the local and national scales.

The establishment of parks with twelve monuments of local heroes demonstrates their devotion while considering the primary considerations at the local level. The local government uses memories of regional and national politics, or politics of memory, to demonstrate how residents of this subdistrict have contributed to the country's preservation. The use of the past to justify the current government (Kaasik-Krogerus et al., 2019; Ranger & Ranger, 2022), highlight a significant event (Rufer, 2012), or carry out acts that advance the interests of a state, a group, or an individual (Hensch, 2023). Through the use of memory politics, the local administration disseminates stories of subdistrict residents who have given their lives in defense of the nation on a national and wider level. The politics of memory are reinstated at Rajabhakti Park and the WCCHMP in order to uphold the monarchy, the armed forces, and the local legend. These represent the social agenda and political expression that are inextricably linked to the built environment and architects. Taking political, economic, and cultural context into account, the built environment contributes to social challenges (Srisat, 2023). In a broader perspective, the

significance of local recall can be reinforced through the utilization of collective memory (Azizbeyli, 2018). Subdistrict politics of memory were used to justify their decision to build the park, as evidenced by the huge expenditure that was approved. Residents and the local government view their construction decision in this way as patriotic citizens expressing their gratitude to their ancestors since without their sacrifice, the motherland would not have been smooth. The idea of constructivism, which holds that people's beliefs and values are socially formed, can be used to explain this local value (Thongsawang et al., 2024) The most important area of social life is politics (Çıdık, 2023), where social members' actions are shaped by these constructions and are not value-free (Bryman, 2004).

Nevertheless, the original goals of demonstrating respect to the legends that served the throne are not explicitly emphasized when the WCCHMP is turned over to the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning, which is seen as the national scale. Instead, by focusing on the multipurpose pavilion, exercise space, playground, activity plaza, performance and leisure area, and so on, it emphasizes the unitarian targets that are more pertinent to current landscape design in contemporary society.Memory is used to establish public support in order to justify or halt governmental actions (Hensch, 2023). Even while it is not clearly shown at the national level of government, the implicit but profound determination of politics of memory and symbolic values towards the monarchy royalty greatly contributes to its formation. Individuals use their common-sense experiences to guide their social behaviors (Bryman, 2004; Schütz, 1962). This is pertinent to both individuals and political leaders at the local and national levels, as many people share similar views and beliefs of how to contain the values of respecting royalty and determining to the project. This can be explained by the fact that the built environment and surrounding landscape are socially constructed with significant objectives that can communicate to the audience, as well as the result of culture, including memories (Spirn, 1996; Waldheim, 2016).

An Emerging Theme in the Built Environment for Aging: Holistic Development?

The establishment of the WCCHPRM is predicated on sociopolitical goals with particular symbolic meanings in Thai society, which are likely to support more abstract ideas like devotion to the monarchy, patriotism, and local pride, all of which serve to justify the actions of the actors—the local government. The park construction is considered by the local government as a holistic development for an aging society. Holistic development for aging encompasses health outcomes, spirituality, religion, and the environment (Acosta & Ely, 2024; Davit et al., 2016; Mouratidis, 2021). Individuals are seen as complex beings with interconnected physical, psychological, and social aspects and older adult preferences, values, lifestyles and social support systems are heeded (Frnni, 2023; Levenson, 2023). In these, intervention is required to support healthy active aging in the community (Davit et al., 2016). The park's multipurpose areas, community development, and exercise, however, have integrated the shifting goals with other concrete uses. Although the WCCHPRM is still under construction, the monument area has been open and welcoming many people since 2022. It comes into play when new central policies or development initiatives that target the local government are brought to light. People visited and prayed at the monuments to worship and generally ask for wishes to come true, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. This practice is common in Thailand, particularly among old people or those who are insecure or situationally weak and lack assistance or a way out. Therefore, a monument park implies physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing, social connections, and overall community engagement as well as spiritual and economic aspects.

Considering the built environment and the aging development agenda, Thailand is an aging society, with more than 20% of its population being 60 years of age or older. According to the national policy, local governments should get ready for the care, employment, and public health needs of senior citizens in their area of authority. The Taladmai subdistrict has long been afflicted by poverty, especially due to the low agricultural production and low-paying general jobs held by older citizens. To possibly win their vote in the upcoming election, the local government must figure out how to reduce poverty and low-paid unemployment. They must also demonstrate their abilities and effectively address the national agenda for aging population support. The WCCHPRM is unquestionably utilized as a possible solution. By arguing that once the park is finished and fully open, locals and senior citizens can sell their farm products to tourists or visitors, or general workers will be hired to do tasks like cooking, playing local music, selling goods, massaging, or creating souvenirs to sell around the designated areas around reception areas, activity plaza, or performance and recreation area, the local government links the WCCHPRM as a way to promote community development and improve the quality of life for older people. Therefore, the built environment serves as new communication networks in addition to being the output (Srisat, 2023). In this instance, the built environment, or WCCHPRM, is positioned as the holistic development tool for enhancing the quality of life for older persons and the community at large, demonstrating an emerging theme of built environment development.

The built environment can have an impact on quality of life, according to the pathways model (Mouratidis, 2021). The WCCHPRM's construction is more pertinent to this model than it first appears. The links between the WCCHPRM as the built environment and expected development outcomes for aging groups are illustrated in Figure 6. Since the local ancestors have influenced national politics, the park initially uses politics of memory as a symbol of the power that this local subdistrict possesses. In addition, given the built environment's cultural, economic, and political context, it can accomplish certain objectives that can affect change, promote a sense of community, and improve everyone's quality of life while working with communities to comprehend their needs and preferences (Sirsat, 2023). After it is transformed into a park that serves a variety of purposes, such as travel, recreation, employment, social interactions, emotional reactions, and health, the advantages appear in a tangible and scientific manner in addition to the political and symbolic goal. The modern lifestyle emphasizes mingling

with neighbors, a multigenerational community, and green spaces (Duany, 2020). The park and its elements then fit in nicely with these trends.

The crucial aspect of the development associated with the WCCHPRM is health, which can support the subjective well-being of older adults who are more physically and psychologically vulnerable because of their deteriorating physical strength and increased propensity to rely on others. Because the park provides opportunities for residents to travel,
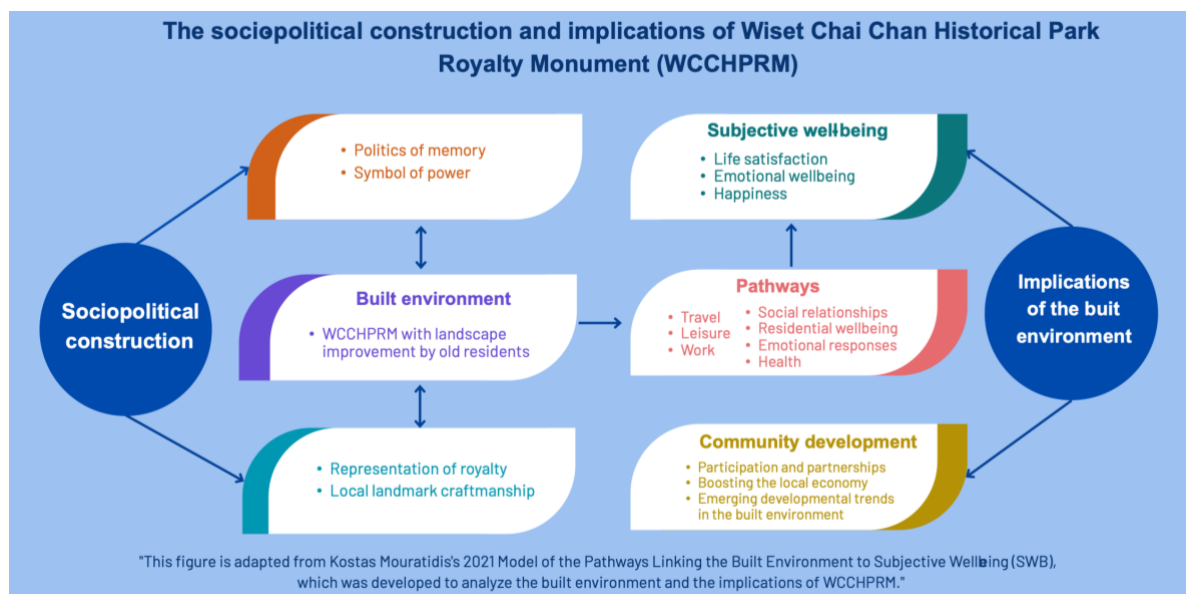
Figure 5

The Particular Values That the (older) Residents Attached to the Monuments

Note. This figure demonstrates the symbolic relationships between individuals and the monuments that have both direct and indirect effects on health and well-being. From *Town & Country Planning and the Department of Public Works*, by Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization, 2024. Copyright 2024 by Taladmai Subdistrict Administrative Organization.

Figure 6

WCCHPRM Links Between the Built Environment and Anticipated Development Outcomes for an Older Population

Note. This figure illustrates the connections between the built environment and subjective well-being by utilizing a case study of WCCHPRM to introduce the emerging theme of a holistic development for aging society through the interaction of the built environment with local people's particular values.

engage in leisure activities, and find additional income or employment that allows them to socialize and support their emotions and health, the WCCHPRM can have a positive impact on residents' overall life satisfaction. Positive health outcomes, improved mental health, and well-being impacts are related with the built environment (Gripko & Joseph, 2024). Since it can promote emotional well-being in the pursuit of happiness and life satisfaction, WCCHPRM's functions extend beyond general physical mental health. For those who are weak and insecure, especially older people, the monuments could offer hope and faith. Even though older adults with limited resources may not be able to fully address their health issues, insecure futures brought on by a lack of income, and worries about family members, they still have faith and can pray for peace from whatever stories or what they believe will provide protection to the local population, such as the legends of heroes from the subdistrict. Figure 4 and 5 are the examples. The foundation of the social and spiritual structure is faith, and the pinnacle of happiness is peace (Shakya, 2019), which is also connected to the implications of the WCCHPRM. As a result, the WCCHPRM's impacts are entwined with scientific and utilitarian applications as well as socio-political agendas. The park monuments' communication is both implicit and explicit, and it serves both community development and political agendas. The use of the built environment with particular symbolic values and objectives to foster community and aging groups from social, cultural, and political ends can be seen as this matter.

CONCLUSION

Clearly stated are the first goals of the local government's creation. They display the political expression in accordance with the symbolic significance of the sacrifice made by ancestors, although local stakeholders are not acquainted with the creation of the park with any green idea that is thought to be at the heart of the current trend in urban planning. From the political and symbolic to the community development, the goals have since changed and expanded. At the national level, the explicit rationale is demonstrated as the community uses it for varied development, while the implicit impulse is the motive as loyalty.

In order to negotiate and legitimize their activities, the local government uses the constructivist notion based on Thai values and the political memory of their locality. A novel proposal of using the park for community development and benefits for older residents is also put on the agenda later, making their claim more credible in the contemporary age that pays attention to development, the environment, and aging society. An emerging theme in the use of the built environment as a tool for community development in rural Thailand towards older adults with limited resources is the combination of the built environment, socio-political inspirations for construction, and community development. The park may serve as a comprehensive or holistic development that fits with the local topography and particular values. Other local governments may follow these guidelines for community development, especially for potential political benefits, as well as unique provincial opportunities through historical legacies. More systematic support would include a transportation system, spatial links, and infrastructure development. A lack of well-rounded systematic support, especially spatial links to public spaces, could limit and obstruct the project. Thus, considerations for improvement should extend to areas surrounding the projected built environment. In this case, the WCCHPRM, once construction is finished, has a great deal of potential as a tool for the community's holistic aging development because it is already beginning to do so by drawing people to worship the monuments and fostering faith, peace, and hope, all of which have a positive impact on social and economic gains as well as well-being.

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