Unveiling the Creative City Potential of Buriram:

An Analysis of Its Cultural and Creative Ecosystems

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Abstract

This study discusses findings from a three-month study, from October to December 2021, on the creative city potential of Buriram Province in Northeastern Thailand. Commissioned by UNESCO, this study aims to firstly, analyze the Cultural and Creative Industries ecosystem and map cultural resources by applying the Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework in Buriram Province and secondly, offer a set of recommended interventions toward the achievement of the triple benefits of sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. The results show that Buriram is abundant in cultural assets that could be used as a foundation for the growth of the creative economy in the city, but it is still lacking in human capital and support infrastructure that allow the culture and creative industries to grow. Subsequently, three interventions are suggested: 1) Integrate the creative economy into development plans; 2) offer space to create, collaborate and grow; and 3) build a creative coalition.

Keywords: *Creative City, Buriram Province, Cultural and Creative Ecosystems, Sustainable Development, Thailand*

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Introduction

The concept of the creative city, first discussed by Charles Landry in the early 1990s, became popular across the world after successful applications in the United Kingdom, continental Europe and North America. It emerged as a solution to urban problems in post-industrial cities, but the surrounding conversation has shifted to using creativity for economic development in cities. The launch of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Creative Cities Network in 2004, together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s Creative Economy Programme, amplified both interest in and understanding of, the creative city among policymakers around the world. This includes policymakers in Asia who have since adopted policies and models from Europe and North America with varying degrees of success (Landry, 2008; Landry and Bianchini, 1995).

Referred to as a "borrowed term" and a "traveling discourse" by scholars, Asian policymakers, especially those in the Global South, have been criticized for appropriating the concept of creative city in a cookie-cutter approach without considering socio-economic differences, unique social structures and political climates (Kong, 2014; Kong and O'Connor, 2009; Wang, 2004). The result is a much narrower focus that prioritizes the cultural consumption of the citizens and the attraction of global corporations to the cities (Gu, 2020). In the case of Thailand, where development policies have been rapidly shifting focus as government heads have changed nine times in the past 20 years, it is not surprising that concepts such as creative economy, creative industries, creative city, smart city and the digital economy are not clearly understood by citizens or the government officials who have been unsuccessful in bringing them to fruition.

The Creative City-Related Policies in Thailand

The creative economy was the first concept to enter Thailand's economic policy discourse. When Thaksin Shinawatra was the Prime Minister of Thailand, this new and promising concept was eagerly discussed. The Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC) was founded in 2005 to foster economic and social development through the integration of Thai culture and creativity with modern design and technology and to create opportunities for Thai citizens to have access to knowledge that will inspire creativity (TCDC, 2017). The idea of creativity as being one of the key drivers of value creation in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors was put forward in the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), developed by Thailand's national planning agency, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC). In the following years, the notions of creative economy, creative industries and creative city were publicized through TCDC's various exhibitions, lectures, workshops, publications and online resources. Subsequently, the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016) was then formulated focusing on the creative economy. Government agencies such as TCDC, the Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA) and the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD) at the time were key actors in advancing the idea of the creative economy in Thailand. However, after the military coup led by General Prayuth Chan-O-Cha took place in May 2014, all projects related to the creative economy were suspended, even though the cultural and creative industries were increasingly prominent in development policies around the world.

The creative industries reappeared in "Thailand 4.0," a new economic model proposed by the government that aims to create a value-based economy that is driven by innovation, creativity, high-quality services and technology. The government suggested that the new economy would boost the quality of life, raise international competitiveness and release the country from the trap of middle income, inequality and imbalance (Jones and Pimdee, 2017). The concept of the creative city also re-emerged in a 2016 project created by TCDC, but instead of focusing on building a creative city, TCDC initiated the Co-Create Charoenkrung Project which serves as a model for creative economy growth within a single district. Experts in the creative city concept, designers and stakeholders in the neighborhood were brought together to brainstorm development plans that align with local needs. Charoenkrung, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Bangkok, was designated as a creative district and the location for the expanded version of TCDC, the Creative Economy Agency (CEA), founded by the Office of the Prime Minister in August 2018. Various ongoing events and activities created by CEA have stimulated the growth of creative businesses, such as galleries and studios and increased opportunities and sales for local vendors in the Charoenkrung district.

The CEA, an organization aiming to drive the creative economy policy forward through collaboration with public and private sectors, has been promoting the development of creativity and innovation through its ongoing activities. It organized the first CEA Forum in 2019 to serve as a platform for knowledge and experience exchange regarding the development of the creative economy, including policymaking, the formation of creative spaces for businesses and communities and the utilization of creativity as a means to gain a competitive advantage (Creative Economy Agency (CEA), 2019). CEA was also active in providing research and insights to the city authorities of Bangkok and Sukhothai in the application of UNESCO Creative Cities. In 2019, the two cities were designated "Creative City of Design" and "Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art," respectively. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network Application Guideline, created by the CEA after its successful execution in Bangkok, has been used to help local authorities understand and complete the application process. Subsequently, Phetchaburi became the latest city in Thailand to be listed as a member of the Creative Cities Network in 2021.

The CEA, an organization dedicated to driving creative economy policies through collaboration with public and private sectors, has been actively promoting creativity and innovation through its initiatives. In 2019, the CEA organized its first CEA Forum to provide a platform for knowledge and experience exchange on creative economy development, including policymaking, the creation of creative spaces for businesses and communities and leveraging creativity for competitive advantage (Creative Economy Agency, 2019). The CEA played a pivotal role in supporting research and offering insights to city authorities, leading to the successful applications of Bangkok and Sukhothai to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which already included Phuket as a Creative City of Gastronomy (since 2015) and Chiang Mai as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art (Since 2017). In 2019, Bangkok was designated a Creative City of Design, while Sukhothai was recognized as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art. Building on these successes, the CEA continued to support other Thai cities, contributing to the designation of Phetchaburi as a Creative City of Gastronomy in 2021 and most recently, Chiang Rai as a Creative City of Design and Suphanburi as a Creative City of Music in 2024.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network Application Guideline, developed by the CEA after the successful designation of Bangkok, has since been used to help local authorities across Thailand understand and complete the application process. However, despite the growing interest in achieving UNESCO Creative City status, there remain some misconceptions among city authorities in Thailand about what this designation truly entails. While UNESCO recognition brings honor, prestige and opportunities to boost tourism in the cities that receive it, becoming a member of the Creative Cities Network requires a strong commitment from city stakeholders. They must work collaboratively to place creativity at the heart of their urban development strategies.

In the case of Thailand's heavily tourism-reliant economy, creative city development models can be adopted to aid the country's recovery after COVID-19. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have hit the tourism industry hard, resulting in a significant drop in international travelers and subsequently, a loss of foreign tourism income amounting to almost 60 percent of all tourism spending and the loss of jobs and businesses both directly and in adjacent industries (Saxon, Sodprasert and Sucharitakul, 2021). In the recovery, cities and small towns need to reconsider growth strategies that move away from fragile large-scale tourism to new models that capture new and varied sources of travelers through differentiated travel experiences, designed and offered by the local community, utilizing their unique cultural assets and creativity. This paper aims to identify the potential growth areas and opportunities for Thailand to utilize the Creative Cities framework set out by UNESCO, in a way that truly benefits the people of Thailand.

Piloting Cities, Culture, Creativity Framework in Buriram Province

This study presents findings and analysis from a three-month investigation, conducted from October to December 2021, on the creative city potential of Buriram Province in Northeastern Thailand. Commissioned by UNESCO, the study aims to first analyze the cultural and creative industries ecosystem and map cultural resources by applying the Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework in Buriram Province. Second, it offers a set of recommended interventions to achieve the triple benefits of sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. In previous issues of this journal (Journal of Urban Culture Research), numerous efforts have explored various strategies and offered recommendations for building resilient creative cities, drawing on creative city discourse, sustainable development theories and additional frameworks such as social capital theory (see Khoo and Chang 2023; Lei 2021; Tayebeh et al. 2023). This paper focuses primarily on the CCC Framework, which has proven to be both comprehensive and effective in helping policymakers and other stakeholders efficiently identify key areas for improvement.

The process undertaken in this study can be summed up in four main steps. Beginning with the literature review, the UNESCO and the World Bank position paper "Cities, Culture and Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth," released in May 2021 was examined, together with creative city-related resources and case studies. Initial research on Buriram Province was collected before in-depth interviews with stakeholders and field observations were conducted between November and early December 2021. Secondary data were obtained from creative city-related literature, government policies and documents and online sources, while the primary data were collected from ten individuals who represent key stakeholders for creative city devel-

opment including the government sector, private sector, academic sector and CSOs). Quali-tative data was then arranged and analyzed. Thematic analysis, a technique for identifying, analyzing and constructing meaningful themes within qualitative data, was employed according to the guiding principles of the CCC Framework (Braun and Clarke, 2019, 2020; Braun et al., 2019). Finally, a set of recommendations has been offered, focusing on interventions for long-term resilience.

The Cities, Culture and Creativity (CCC) Framework
The CCC Framework employed in the analysis is the result of a collaboration between UNESCO and the World Bank. This framework is for policymakers who recognize that the development of creativity can contribute to economic growth as well as a better quality of life for city inhabitants. Drawing from case studies of nine diverse countries, it provides guiding principles that allow city authorities and other stakeholders to realize the city's full potential in order to achieve the triple benefits of sustainable urban development, city competitiveness and social inclusion. The Framework can be used across the following steps:

1. Map the cultural resources and the existing cultural and creative industries
2. Identify key constraints to the growth of these resources and industries
3. Prioritize interventions and sequence implementation to tackle key constraints
4. Build and empower a coalition comprising representatives from the government sector, private sector, institution sector, CSO sector and local communities

Long-lasting spatial, social and economic benefits can be realized when a city's local government fully endorses policies and creative projects and the coalition effectively implements interventions. The Framework can help the coalition to boost city competitiveness and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the short term, as well as to leverage the city's full potential for long-term sustainable development (UNESCO and World Bank, 2021).

The CCC Framework shows that a creative environment is made up of creative assets and resources, supported by six enablers that include different players and city characteristics. The position paper demonstrates how the combination of six enablers has led to spatial, economic and social benefits in nine cities that are presented as case studies. These cases demonstrate that there is no one pathway to success. Any key actor in the creative ecosystem can initiate creative city strategic plans, whether it is private chefs in Lima, Peru, or a newly established institution that focuses on the protection of heritage in Madaba, Jordan. The approach can be top-down, bottom-up or a combination of both. Moreover, the size and density of a city, the types of assets or industries and whether the city is situated in a developed or developing country have no significance within the CCC Framework (UNESCO and World Bank, 2021). The situation analysis and recommendations or suggested interventions that follow will focus on the six enablers within the framework and the potential outcomes specific to Buriram (Figure 1).
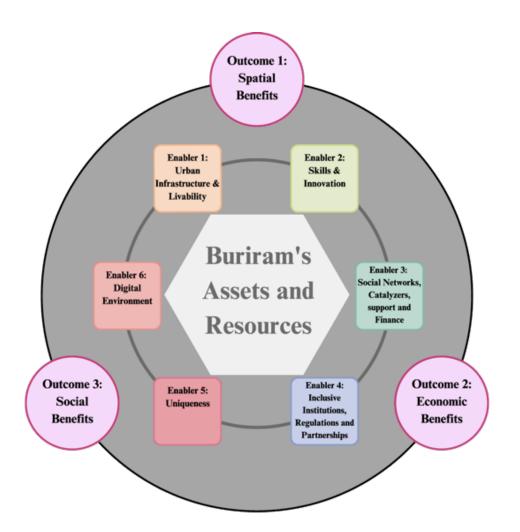
Figure 1. Cities, Culture and Creativity Framework (Adapted from UNESCO and World Bank, 2021).

Buriram Cultural and Creative Ecosystems

Buriram is known for its archaeological sites, with more than 60 sandstone sanctuaries around the province, its quality rice and agricultural production and for having a great quantity of manufacturing factories. In recent years, however, Buriram has gained more international fame for its football club, Buriram United, one of the top performing football teams domestically and in the region, the FIFA-level football stadium and international sports events, such as Thai MotoGP, TA2 Thailand, Thailand Super Series and the Buriram Marathon.

Located in the lower part of the northeastern region of Thailand, about 400 km northeast of Bangkok, Buriram Province covers a total area of approximately ten thousand square kilometers, ranked 17th biggest province in the nation. Buriram is part of a group of provinces named Southern Isan, along with Nakhon Ratchasima, Surin, Sisaket and Ubon Ratchathani. This multicultural region is home to the Thai-Laos community which has been influenced by beliefs in Buddhism and Hinduism. Heritage from the ancient Khmer

civilization that has made this region unique is a group of sandstone sanctuaries scattered in the provinces. Creative city literature has shown that diversity is a driver of creativity and innovation and Southern Isan is a true melting pot of cultures, featuring ethnic groups Thai Korat, Lao, Khmer and Kui who speak different dialects. The diversity of inhabitants gives rise to a diversity in cultural traditions.

The history of Buriram is culturally rich, if poorly documented. From the 7th to 11th century a moated Dvaravati city was established by the Mon people. The influence of the Khmer Empire reached the area by the 10th century and central Thailand was invaded by King Suryavarman II of the Khmers (the builder of Angkor Wat) in the early 12th century. Buriram became part of the Khmer Empire, with sandstone ruins from this period still in existence today. It finally came under Thai rule in the early Bangkok period and was given its present-day name, Buriram which translates from ancient Sanskrit to "city of pleasantness" (Buriram Provincial Office, 2021).

With such a variety of cultural and creative assets present in the province, each seems to have its own ecosystem that is mostly separate from others. According to the data collected, what brings them together is Buriram United, a professional football club (BRUTD FC), which is the biggest event organizer, fundraiser and investor in Buriram. Newin Chidchob, Chairman of Buriram United, through his many visionary creative projects that aim to make Buriram an all-year-round travel destination, has been spreading the benefits of the recent increase in the popularity of Buriram to local craft producers (BRUTD FC merchandise and local products sold in events) and rural villagers (homestay providers and local guides). His latest idea explores experiential tourism, which will allow visitors to engage with the local community and learn about their way of life. He is one of the most influential individuals in Buriram who is not only able to convince the local government and city authorities to support his city development ideas but is also able to see them through to fruition with his own financial backing and financial support from private sponsors.

The provincial and local government agencies involved with the culture and creative industries, such as the Buriram Provincial Cultural Office, Buriram Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports and Buriram Provincial Administrative Organization follow directions from the central government but also lend support to Chidchob's ideas and projects that align with the local government's vision and development strategies. However, there does not seem to be any attempt to integrate the various cultural and creative assets and promote a unified unique identity for the city, the policy and financial support available appear disjointed.

Another key stakeholder that is directly involved with the development of creative workers and the preservation of traditions and crafts is Buriram Rajabhat University, the biggest educational institution in Buriram. Students in the Bachelor of Education Program in Dramatic Arts are trained in traditional and local dramatic art forms and they are expected to become teachers after graduation. During their five-year program, they are given opportunities, through Buriram University's Office of Arts and Culture, to practice their craft in local festivals and events and earn extra income. Research related to culture conducted by academic staff and students is also key to the preservation and promotion of local heritage. Examples include research on maximizing local food products to stimulate the economy within a rural community (Tahom, Dhurata, Bungtong and Wongsa, 2018), a study on the

local cultural knowledge around conserving the community forest (Tahom and Dhurata, 2016) and a case study on a local musical band (Kengkaew, 2020).

It is worth noting that when it comes to pinning down the identity of Buriram, each stakeholder thinks of it quite differently. The local government put five assets and characteristics in its slogan, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TTT) focuses on heritage, crafts and architecture, Buriram United wants to highlight sports and tourism (cultural and experiential), the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) sees Buriram as a venue for international events and the Provincial Cultural Office is focused on preserving and protecting heritage, traditions and culture, but only from the past.

Analysis

After mapping the cultural and creative resources of Buriram, this section discusses strengths and opportunities concerning the six categories of creative city enablers in the CCC Framework.

Unique Value Proposition

Out of the six enablers, uniqueness is already present in the forms of crafts, archaeological sites and architecture. For Buriram, the official slogan of the province is "Stone castle town, volcanic land, beautiful silk, rich culture, excellent sports city" (Buriram Town Municipality, 2018), a phrase that highlights cultural assets that could be used as a foundation for the growth of the creative economy in the city. In addition, the city has been promoted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand as "the town of two-era castles"[1] because of their ancient sandstone Khmer temples and the recently built Buriram Stadium (also known as Thunder Castle Stadium). The sandstone sanctuaries that represent the ancient Khmer civilization are complemented by a series of traditional rituals and ceremonies, such as the Khao Phanom Rung Festival which takes place when the sun aligns perfectly through the doors of the temple. This intrinsic uniqueness attracts the interest of visitors to the city and marks Buriram as one of the 20 "creative cities" in Thailand according to the Department of Intellectual Property (Department of Intellectual Property, 2011). As the location of the greatest number of extinct volcanoes in Thailand (six), it is truly a city deserving of the name "volcanic land." Volcanic soil can also provide uniqueness to local products, such as rice and silk, which are dyed using volcanic soil to create a distinctive orange color. In recent years, the growing popularity of Buriram United, the football stadium and a range of world-class sports events has provided Buriram with another uniquely unrivaled image.

With many unique values, Buriram is experiencing an identity crisis and there is not one unique asset that stands out and represents a distinguishable image of the city. Moreover, while it is clear that Buriram has abundant cultural and creative assets, the link between these assets, the creative industries and the concept of the creative city did not seem apparent to the local government officials and city authorities during the interviews that took place in November-December 2021. The archaeological sites, crafts and architecture were mentioned only in connection with tourist activities, suggesting that they are valuable only to those from outside of the city, or even the country and there is no use for them identified outside the context of tourism. The traditional crafts such as the variety of silk products or culinary traditions, though unique to the local community, are not considered by the city authorities to have much creative potential or growth opportunity.

Urban Infrastructure and Livability for Creativity Development

In Buriram, local crafts such as silk products are made by community enterprises or Farm Women Groups in villages. The finished products are then distributed either directly by the producers or through intermediaries. Customers can purchase them at local markets and retailers in the city or from retailers nationwide. The products are also increasingly available online. Culinary products, such as salty fermented shrimp, are distributed similarly. Craftmakers prefer working in their own houses or community spaces close to home. City authorities support this way of working, because of the prohibitive costs associated with providing new spaces. Additionally, with the increase in experiential tourism seen in remote villages, witnessing the silk-making process in a village represents an opportunity to deliver a more authentic travel experience. That being said, being far from urban areas which have better digital connectivity, cultural venues and educational and health services, limits creative development. Even though Buriram Rajabhat University has helped train villagers to improve creativity and create new products from silk materials,[2] ongoing training and exposure to new ideas and inspirations are important for creativity to thrive.

The lack of a physical and spatial environment that supports creativity and the exchange of ideas and experiences, which is Enabler 1 in the CCC Framework, leads to the underdevelopment of skills and innovation, or the second enabler related to human capital. There are both formal and informal education opportunities within the creative fields present in Buriram, particularly at Buriram Rajabhat University and in villages. However, access to the necessary skills that align with the evolving demands of contemporary creative and cultural markets remains constrained. Craftspeople and service providers associated with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) can no longer depend exclusively on physical, on-site visitors to sustain their livelihoods. The integration of digital technologies and strategic marketing competencies can enable these workers to effectively engage with and expand their potential customer base.

The improvement of the digital environment, or Enabler 6, can make a significant impact on local cultural and creative workers. However, Buriram is still lacking in this area. While internet access is available throughout Buriram, the speed and quality of the connection vary greatly from area to area. In the 2025 revised version of the development plan (2566-2570 BE) (Buriram Governor's Office, 2023), out of 110 planned activities, three are specifically related to setting up a digital skills training center, conducting short digital skills courses for farmers and organizing camps for youth. These activities have been allocated a combined budget of 39.2 million baht, which represents only 0.5% of the total five-year plan budget of 7.78 billion baht. However, it is important to note that there is no mention of digital technologies in the Local Development Plan (2566-2570 BE) prepared by the Buriram Provincial Administrative Organization (2021a). This suggests that city authorities do not regard digitalization as crucial to improving the quality of life for citizens.

Digitalization promotes innovation and creativity, lowering barriers and increasing accessibility, as seen in the 2018 project "Buriram B-Stay," in which a Buriram United affiliation B-Stay partnered with Airbnb to help local villagers manage homestay services for global visitors for the MotoGP and sports tourism events. Because of limited access to the internet and digital skills, B-Stay helps local hosts create and manage listings on the Airbnb platform.[3] Relying on intermediaries to help them connect to their online customers takes

more time and can be costly, however. When locals are taught to be able to use online platforms to list their products and services, they can become more independent from intermediates, reduce costs, effectively respond to customers' needs and generate revenue through diverse online methods.

Support Infrastructure and Inclusive Regulations
Enablers 3 and 4 (Social networks, catalyzers, support and finance; inclusive institutions, regulations and partnerships) are seen as soft but crucial complements to the physical and spatial environment and the human capital previously discussed. Creative professionals grow and evolve when they can gain access to financing and business development services and when they can form a creative community in which they can inspire one another and connect with other stakeholders. Moreover, their creativity needs to be supported and enhanced within the overall framework of city development strategies. Currently, in both the Provincial Development Plan of Buriram Province (2566-2570 BE), created by the Governor's Office (2023) and the Development Strategies of Buriram Provincial Administrative Organization (2566-2570 BE) (2021a), there is no mention of the creative economy, creative industries or creative city. The main development goals in both of these plans are to promote Buriram as a major tourist destination for ancient Khmer civilization and global-standard sports. Two additional goals for these organizations are improved agricultural production and quality of life for the citizens.

Data collected in this study shows that access to financing and business development services is extremely limited for artists, especially those who specialize in contemporary art. An example of this is an art exhibition called "Thani Art Light"[4] which took place in March 2021. It was organized by a group of young creatives who turned an abandoned building into an art venue with various rooms, using lights and decorations to convey various themes. The event was well-received by visitors, but the organizers received no financial support from any public or private organization. On the other hand, traditional craft-makers and performers, or those working in local festivals, are more likely to receive funding support from the local government, the Cultural Office and the Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports. However, the process can be lengthy and complicated. When the local government does not see the benefits of creativity and potential contribution to the local economy, all while promoting social cohesion and quality of life, it makes it extremely difficult for the culture and creative industries to grow. Additionally, when the strategic plans do not include any support for creative goods and services, there is no budget allocated to the development of the creative fields.

However, for Enabler 3, there seem to be strong networks among the local communities, catalyzed by Buriram United. This football club brings together not only its fans but also the city inhabitants who put their trust in Newin Chidchob personally. Recently, he came up with an idea to develop a group of local guides in the "Gu Guide" program.[5] The application process is open to anyone in Buriram who has a service mindset and owns a vehicle. These applicants will then be trained to be local guides for visitors to the province. Through this initiative, he aims to increase tourism potential, generate more income for the community and promote social and economic development in Buriram.

Although many of the projects initiated by Buriram United are labeled as tourism development, it is clear that creativity plays a big part in both ideation and execution. An influential and visionary leader who makes great use of his creativity is a signature strength of Buriram. Partnerships between the private sector and other stakeholders are critical. This is especially true of the local government, which can establish policies and regulations to enable the cultural and creative industries to thrive. What appears to be lacking is not the presence of creativity-related initiatives, but an understanding of what the cultural and creative industries are and the potential of their spatial, economic and social benefits in the long run.

Having Buriram United, a private entity, as a true community leader is a strength in this regard. With a large amount of support and financial backing, digitalization can take place faster and more efficiently than if it were led by the local government. Once local communities are better equipped with computer skills and network access, they will be able to operate businesses catering to an increased tourism demand in Buriram. They can also source materials and reach customers directly via online platforms to sell their products and services. More training in marketing could be provided to boost audience reach and engagement.

Planning the Route to a Creative City

After identifying challenges and opportunities for enabling creative cities, the next step in the CCC Framework is to prioritize interventions that will support the long-term development of the cultural and creative industries. Using the findings gained from the data analysis, a set of interventions is recommended in this section, for Buriram to drive the cultural and creative industries forward and receive the spatial, economic and social benefits that those industries offer.

Intervention 1: Integrate the Creative Economy into Development Plans

This first intervention is related to Enablers 3 and 4, network and support infrastructure and institutional and regulatory environment. The city authorities need to realize that the push for the creative economy can co-exist with a focus on tourism development, as cultural tourism is part of the cultural and creative industries. The projects that Buriram United has initiated have been driven by creativity, though by specific individuals, not a collective. The direction that the city is moving toward through creative initiatives aligns perfectly with the principles of the creative city: whether it is the design of souvenirs that makes use of local crafts, or the "Gu Guide" projects that utilize local resources to respond to tourist demands. By integrating creativity into tourism development policy, more budget can be allocated to the development and professionalization of creativity, which can include improved infrastructure and workspaces, fund mechanisms and marketing campaigns for local products.

When creativity grows within the tourism industries and craft design and production, it leads to a more distinctive value proposition for travelers. More local employment and sales opportunities will follow, which will attract more creative individuals and private entities to invest in local products, generating more income for the local community in a virtuous cycle. More interactions with other creative workers can lead to collective inspiration that enhances innovation and growth.

Intervention 2: Offering Space to Create, Collaborate and Grow
This intervention is concerned with the physical and spatial environment, human capital and the digital environment, which are enablers 1, 2 and 6. As seen in the success of the project "Thani Art Light," unused spaces in the city can be transformed into creative spaces. Some young artists are enthusiastic about offering something new and creative for the city and with affordable spaces supported by private and public entities, creativity can be enhanced. Currently, craft makers create their products in their own community, often in rural areas, with little access to new creative ideas or inspiration. This makes it more difficult for innovation to take place. Offering workspaces for these craftspeople in the city, where they can interact and collaborate with young creative students from Buriram Rajabhat University, receive up-to-date training and be able to pass their wisdom and creative techniques to the younger generation will enable inspiration and creativity to flow more freely in the local community. Being in the city and having better access to the internet can improve sales opportunities and allow them to further advance their skills both in production and in business.

Rajabhat University has its own Southern Isan Cultural Centre that serves as a learning center for the preservation, promotion and continuation of arts and culture of the Southern Isan Region.[6] This center can provide learning opportunities for not only the creative workers but also the audience. It can help the local communities hone their crafts, provide spaces for learning and sharing between communities or artists from different fields, potentially resulting in unique crossover innovations.

By allocating workspaces for craftspeople, creative workers and those working in ICH-related jobs, the local government will see noticeable improvements socially, economically and spatially. Greater social cohesion can be expected when creative individuals can exchange ideas and learn from one another. More income can be generated for those living in rural areas when they are given a chance to work and provide services and products in the city. The opening of new creative spaces can draw more businesses and revitalize key areas.

Intervention 3: Build a Creative Coalition
This intervention is related to Enablers 3 and 4; networks and support infrastructure and partnerships. While strong networks among the local communities are already present, led by Newin Chidchob, launching a coalition supported by the local government that includes representatives for all stakeholders, as well as experts in the fields of creative tourism and creative economy, will allow the community to most effectively leverage the local cultural and creative assets for sustainable development. Each member of the coalition would bring unique expertise, viewpoints and strengths to the table and together they will be more able to effectively coordinate successful creative city initiatives.

In terms of value proposition, there are many options for Buriram to choose from, but a more unified identity needs to be agreed upon. When all stakeholders are brought together to discuss the future and position of the city with the support and perspectives of experts, everyone will have a much clearer understanding of where the city is headed from the perspective of culture and creativity. Development strategies and project plans that result from this coalition will be more precise and they are more likely to be successful and lead to economic growth and a better quality of life for locals, in a shorter amount of time.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this report are the result of a three-month study, from October to December 2021, on the creative city potential of Buriram Province in Northeastern Thailand. The CCC Framework in the UNESCO and the World Bank position paper "Cities, Culture and Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth," released in May 2021 has been used as the analytical framework for the study. Secondary data were obtained from creative city-related literature, government policies and documents and online sources, the primary data were collected from ten individuals who represent key stakeholders for creative city development including the government sector, private sector, academic sector and CSOs.

Out of the six enablers in the CCC Framework, Enabler 5 – uniqueness - is the strongest and most prominent for Buriram. But when the local government does not appear to recognize the benefits of creativity and potential contribution to the local economy, it makes it extremely difficult for the culture and creative industries to grow. Additionally, when the strategic plans do not include any support for creative goods and services, there is no budget allocated to the development of the creative fields (Enablers 3, 4). Training opportunities for skills that accommodate the demands of creative and cultural markets are limited (Enabler 2) and being far from urban areas which have better digital connectivity, cultural venues, educational and health services, craftspeople cannot get inspired or further develop their skills (Enablers 1, 6).

Based on the analysis of the cultural and creative industries ecosystem and the enabling environment, three interventions are suggested: 1) Integrate the creative economy into development plans; 2) offer space to create, collaborate and grow; and 3) build a creative coalition

The application of the CCC Framework has been instrumental in assessing Buriram's creative city potential. By using the framework, city authorities and other stakeholders can better understand and leverage the city's unique assets to foster economic growth and improve the quality of life for city inhabitants. Furthermore, fostering effective collaboration between policymakers, cultural institutions and local community stakeholders is crucial, as it can lead to both immediate benefits and long-term resilience.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

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